



# Andrew Younger

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DARTMOUTH EAST



## Spring & Provincial Budget Draw Near

March 2011



The Canada Games are now behind us, only memories remain. By any measure they were a great success. It was wonderful to see so many people out to enjoy both the ticketed and non-ticketed events and festivities. Cole Harbour Place and the Dartmouth Sportsplex were among the very busy sites hosting events. A special thanks to all the volunteers who made the event possible.



Andrew with Canadian astronaut Dr. Robert Thirsk at a February 4th announcement in Dartmouth that brought space agency resources to Nova Scotia classrooms.

In February I attended the annual East Dartmouth Boys & Girls Club breakfast with Moosheads owner Bobby Smith as well as an announcement by the Canadian Space Agency putting space related learning resources in classrooms across the province.

As spring quickly approaches, so too does the next sitting of the Nova Scotia legislature. The budget will take up much of the time in the coming sitting. Over the past two years the NDP government has increased both the debt and deficit of the province. To get the province's finances back on track, cuts will likely have to be deeper than they would have had the NDP begun work getting things in shape at the beginning of their mandate.

I believe the budget must place a priority on the province's long term sustainability in economic competitiveness, education, healthcare, and the environment. I will be paying close attention to this, as well as the local funding and service concerns you have brought to my attention.



## Dartmouth Ringette Team Wins Photo Competition



In anticipation of the Canada Winter Games, which were held from Saturday February 12th through Sunday February 25th, Ringette Nova Scotia launched its Get Your Canada Winter Games Face On! photo contest.

The winning photo was to be presented along with other well wishes to the coaches and players of ringette's Team Nova Scotia. And the winner is...

...the Dartmouth Ringette Association's Under 12 Team Hurd!! Check out their photo on the right.

## Impact of Education Cuts Still Unknown

In the last issue of this newsletter I noted that the NDP government had asked school boards to prepare plans for a 22% cut over three years. This 22% included the impact of boards not being funded for increases associated with provincially negotiated collective agreements and other costs which the boards have little to no control over.

You may have heard that a final number has been announced. While the percentage cut was announced as 2% over one year, it is in fact somewhere between a 4% and 5% cut the boards must absorb when increases noted above are included. This may not be substantially different than the original 22% cut over three years as it was always anticipated that the smallest cut would be in year one. The problem is we don't know. The government is not saying what their plans are for years two and three.

Halifax Regional School Board has not yet announced how it will achieve the required cuts. However, the South Shore Regional School Board has cut severe learning disability consultants, an autism facilitator, a math consultant, and a literacy consultant. These are all cuts which will directly impact the classroom. Whether your child makes use of these services or not, the classroom experience for your child will be impacted.

I am particularly troubled that the NDP has suggested that math and literacy support is a good place to find the cuts that will be necessary after administration is trimmed as far as possible. Math and literacy skills are important life skills and are strong indicators of future success in almost any field. As a member of the Brookhouse Elementary School Advisory Committee for almost six years, I've seen the value of having access to math and literacy support from the board to help students overcome challenges and succeed in their studies.

The Liberal Caucus believes a review of the public school system, with a focus on long term student learning and expected outcomes as opposed to short term financial savings is the right approach. This approach would include determining what skill sets we want our students to have upon graduation. Unfortunately, the current government has confused an effective public school education system with balancing the provincial budget. These are two distinct processes that should not be confused.

The position of the Liberal Caucus is to focus on students, and to review the programs and the delivery model to make improvements. We know there are policies and practices that need to be changed. We want to work with parents and teachers to recommend the changes that are required.

## Halifax Regional Police City Watch

The Halifax Regional Police City Watch program is a computerized messaging system with the ability to quickly inform citizens and businesses of imminent hazards and current issues such as criminal activity, emergency alerts (major fires, evacuations and weather events), lost children and road closures.

Residents and businesses who register with City Alert receive notification providing critical information relative to events in your area via telephone and/or by e-mail.

If you wish to register for City Watch, please send an e-mail with your business name, contact information and emergency contact information to [citywatch@halifax.ca](mailto:citywatch@halifax.ca).

## Be Sure To Check On Ice Thickness Before Skating



Skating on Dartmouth's lakes is one of the great benefits of living in the City of Lakes. However, with the ever changing weather conditions, ice that looks safe may not actually be safe for skating or other winter activities.

The Red cross recommends a minimum thickness of 15cm for individual skating or 21cm for group skating.

HRM provides online ice thickness reports for lakes and ponds across the municipality. You can check out those reports at:

[http://www.halifax.ca/real\\_property/ice/index.asp](http://www.halifax.ca/real_property/ice/index.asp)

## MLA Expenses Now Online

For much of my time serving as your MLA, the issue of MLA expenses has been in the news. The Auditor General completed a well known report and long overdue changes were made to MLA expenses. The Liberal Caucus fought successfully to have constituency expenses posted online. This has now happened.

You can view the constituency and travel expenses of any MLA, including me at the following site:

<http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/people/offices/house-of-assembly-management-commission/expenses/>

I would be happy to answer any questions you have about the expenses I have filed to operate my office. However, in the meantime there are a few things to know about these reports.

MLAs file expenses at different times. This is because MLAs cannot file expenses until proof of payment (bank statements, cancelled cheques, credit card statements, etc) has been received. Therefore the listed expenses often cover multiple months. Some media have been incorrectly reporting the totals as the monthly expenses of an MLA. This is not accurate. Similarly there are some months where an MLA may not show up on the expense report because they did not file for reimbursement of any expenses that month.

Most of the expenses MLAs seek reimbursement for relate to the operation of the constituency office. MLAs pay for the operation of their constituency offices (rent, insurance, phone bills, certificates, advertising, office supplies, computers, postage, etc) and are reimbursed for those costs to a maximum dollar amount specified by law.

It is my priority to ensure that my office operates as efficiently as possible while still meeting the expectations of the residents in my riding. Your input and suggestions are always welcome.

## Upcoming Events & Meetings In The Community

### Dartmouth Kinsmen Community Pancake Breakfast (Charity Fundraiser)

Next Breakfast is March 27th  
East Dartmouth Community Centre  
4th Sunday of each month—9:30am until 1:00pm  
\$6 adults & \$4 children

### Gardening Talk with Jodi DeLong

March 10, 7:00-8:30pm  
Woodlawn Public Library  
31 Eisener Blvd  
902-455-5251

### Free Personal Wellness Profile

March 17, 8:30am-10:30pm  
Dartmouth Community Health Team  
58 Tacoma Drive

### Dartmouth Seniors' Service Centre 2nd Annual Open House

March 27, 2:00-4:00pm  
Dartmouth Seniors Service Centre  
45 Ochterloney Street

### Free Stress Management and Stress Reduction Session

March 28, 6:00-7:30pm  
Dartmouth Community Health Team  
58 Tacoma Drive

### Hope for Wildlife Society Coffee House

April 3, 12:00-4:00pm  
Cole Harbour Place  
51 Forest Hills Parkway

### Dartmouth East Liberal Association Annual General Meeting

April 6, 7:00pm  
Location TBC

To remove your name from our mailing list, please [click here](#).

Questions or comments? E-mail us at [info@andrewyounger.ca](mailto:info@andrewyounger.ca) or call 902.406.4420



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