

# LATEST NEWS

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## "Building Tomorrow"

### Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia

On April 24th 2019 at New Ross Farm Museum Honorable Keith Colwell, Minister of Agriculture announced a \$751k funding package over three years for the Nova Scotia Christmas tree and greenery industry.

This funding will allow Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia ('CTCNS') to support the Christmas tree and greenery industry to execute activities outlined in its newly developed strategic plan. Working strategically and collaboratively we will achieve our three overarching objectives: one, to increase profitability for Nova Scotian Christmas tree producers; two, to increase the number of growers in the industry and the number of trees produced; and three, to increase the overall quality of our product.

Until recently, the Christmas tree industry had been evolving for nearly one hundred years with minimal research and development. This undertaking by CTCNS with the support of Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture has the potential to generate substantial farming revenue for rural Nova Scotia.

### ... now for the backstory...

When a delegation from CTCNS approached the Department of Agriculture for support developing our industry, the Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Keith Colwell sent a very clear message that his department was willing to help CTCNS, thus the Christmas tree and greenery industry in Nova Scotia, but not without a completed "strategic plan". This plan was to very clearly and concisely identify the role of the CTCNS and the direction forward for the N.S Christmas tree and greenery industry.

This exercise was only possible because of guiding presence of well qualified, and patient, personnel from NSDA's Value Chain Development team. Looking back, it hardly seems possible, the process all began with our first meeting on March 23rd 2018 working on SWOT analysis (to determine our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats). I know many in the room wondered if there ever could be something that would resemble a positive outcome. With the assurance of agriculture staff, we struggled along until, I will use the expression "we got our feet squarely on the ground" and things seemed to start to fall in place.

Together, we established Council's vision and mission.

The vision of the CTCNS is to be a truly sustainable industry for the benefit of Nova Scotians, with a focus on quality,

continued growth and collaboration. Through improved efficiencies and innovation, the industry will double in size and quadruple in value by providing quality products that respond to changing customer demands in all present and future markets.

The mission of the CTCNS is to support the growth, improve and increase profitability of the Nova Scotia Christmas Tree and greenery industry and ultimately its future and sustainability. "Thrive and Prosper"

With the SWOT analysis behind us we were able to generate, compare and develop strategic options. This exercise demonstrated how we could use our strengths to capitalize



Hon. Keith Colwell announcing support for the Christmas Tree and greenery industry development. (Photo: Brittany Frenette)



on our opportunities and mitigate threats. We also gained an understanding of how our weaknesses could impact our opportunities and how they could be taken advantage of our threats.

To accomplish the vision and mission of the CTCNS it became necessary to establish strategic priorities that will be our focus moving forward as they will have a direct impact on our three overarching objectives (as mentioned above).

The five top priorities determined by the working group:

1. Industry Leadership
2. Productivity
3. Quality
4. Marketing
5. Research and Development

Everything that has been outlined so far took approximately ten months to complete. It was then necessary for industry participants to take a break to manage their own business operations, including a harvest season. With the ground work completed a "Strategic Plan" for the CTCNS was written in late 2018.

Once the 2018 harvest/Christmas season was over it was urgent the working group get back on track, with the guidance of the now written strategic plan we would establish

direction for the Christmas tree industry to best address the five priorities. With the groundwork completed, the strategic plan completed, and working teams established it is time to take the next step. At the first 2019 meeting members broke off into working teams, one for each of the five priorities identified.

Another key element that will help propel the Christmas tree and greenery industry is the development of the "SMART" Christmas tree seedling. This seedling is the result of a recently completed research project conducted through Dalhousie University Agriculture Campus Truro. This true Balsam Fir has the ability to regain markets lost to the fake tree and open new more distant markets, because of the trees ability to retain its needles for an extended period.

As Chair of Council's "Building Tomorrow" Committee I want to thank the Minister of Agriculture, Honorable Keith Colwell, his staff, the staff at CTCNS, and all of the individuals who have and will continue to work on the various aspects of developing the future for the Christmas tree industry here in beautiful Nova Scotia.

**Richard Levy Chair**

**"Building Tomorrow"**



Mike Keddy, Council President welcoming all to the Building Tomorrow Funding Announcement. (Photo: Brittany Frenette)



Angus Bonnyman, Executive Director of Council presenting the Minister with a hat. (Photo: Brittany Frenette)





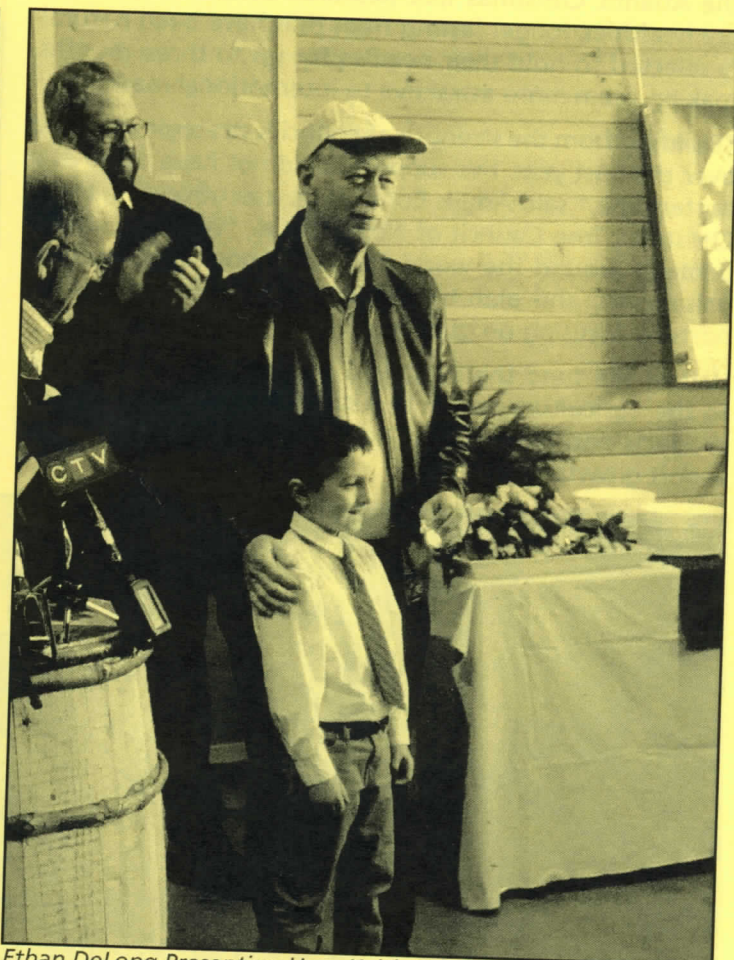
(Photo: Brittany Frenette)



Hon. Keith Colwell thanking the Kitchen Staff for the wonderful meal they put on. A huge 'thank-you' again to all the ladies who made this day possible. (Photo: Brittany Frenette)



Angus Bonnyman, Richard Levy, Hon. Keith Colwell, Michael Keddy and Ethan DeLong. (Photo: Brittany Frenette)



Ethan DeLong Presenting Hon. Keith Colwell with a Pin. (Photo: Brittany Frenette)



# Investment will Help Christmas Tree Growers

## Agriculture

Nova Scotia's Christmas tree growers will benefit from funding to strengthen their industry and help explore new export markets.

Agriculture Minister Keith Colwell joined the Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia for the announcement today, April 24, in New Ross, Lunenburg Co. The \$751,000 in funding comes from the Building Tomorrow Fund, a three-year, \$9 million provincial investment in agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture.

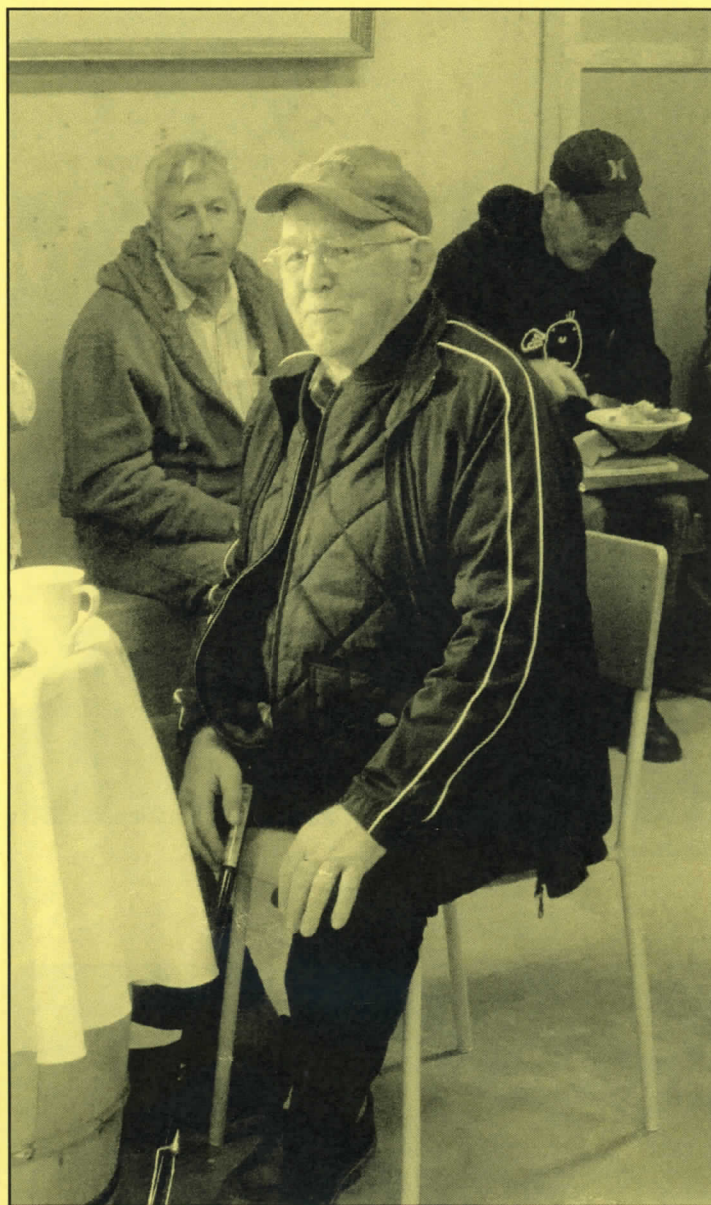
"Thanks to our popular Boston tree tradition, our Christmas trees are exported all around the world to places like Panama, the United States and the Caribbean," said Mr. Colwell. "I'm pleased our Christmas tree growers will be able to open even more export markets and become stronger competitors against artificial trees."

The funding will be provided to the council over three years for a research and development plan, field trials, the development of quality standards, market research, an operational efficiency study and the development of a sustainability plan for the council.

The funding will also give producers the chance to plant SMART trees on their lots. SMART trees were developed at the Atlantic Christmas Tree Research Centre in Truro and are healthier, longer lasting trees that have been naturally selected to hold their needles for up to three months, making them more attractive to international markets.

"Building from the strength of council's strategic planning over the past year, this support could not have come at a better time," said Angus Bonnyman, executive director of Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia. "We have strong demand around the world for our famous forest grown balsam firs, and plan to quadruple the value of our exports by focusing on quality and innovation."

Half of the fund this year, \$1.5 million, will be allocated to the agriculture sector to support the creation of new products and new market development to further drive export growth. ♣



Above: A Happy Birthday to Jack Wentzell, who had a birthday on the day of the announcement. (Photo: Brittany Frenette)

Below: The large crowd out to support the Christmas Tree and Grennery Industry. (Photo: Brittany Frenette)

