

WEEK IN REVIEW: Oct. 29-Nov. 4

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Body

Bus drivers OK strike - Nearly all members of the Amalgamated Transit Union vote to reject the city's latest contract offer, as 97 per cent call for an across-the-board strike. The strike, which could start as early as Dec. 1, would include bus drivers, maintenance workers, mechanics and ferry operators. The union and city are fighting over wages, and over the city's proposal to delete a contract clause protecting injured workers' wages. Union president Robin West says he hopes both sides can reach agreement in time to prevent a strike.

Senior drivers may test for discount

Service Nova Scotia Minister Angus MacIsaac says his department is considering offering a half-price discount to seniors on their driver registration, provided they pass a driving course. The Tory Blue Book election platform promised seniors a discount if they learned to compensate for problems often related to age, such as reduced vision and slower reaction time.

Shrubsall back in court

William Chandler Shrubsall, a.k.a. Ian Thor Greene, goes on trial for aggravated sexual assault, unlawful confinement and choking in a June 22, 1998, attack on a student.

The student testifies Tuesday she met Shrubsall at a bar, danced with him, and walked back to the frat house he lived in. She said once they arrived at his room, he attacked her when she tried to use his phone to call a taxi.

Shrubsall admits to assault on Thursday, but denies sexually assaulting the woman.

Earlier this year, Shrubsall was convicted of sexually assaulting another woman, and beating a third unconscious with a baseball bat. He was convicted of beating his mother to death with a baseball bat when he was 16.

The Nova Scotia Supreme Court trial continues tomorrow.

Sysco workers OK new contract

Sydney Steel workers vote 85 per cent in favour of accepting a contract with Swiss-based steelmaker Duferco, paving the way for the province to hand its longtime ownership over to private industry.

Premier John Hamm estimates the money-losing steel mill accounts for more than \$3 billion of the province's \$11-billion debt.

Duferco plans to employ about 200 workers to produce slab steel for a plant it owns in Farrell, Pa.

Economic Minister Gordon Balser introduces legislation Tuesday to privatize Sysco, but doesn't rule out any future public money going to the mill.

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IMP chopper deal goes public

Southam News reports the Department of National Defence has awarded Halifax-based IMP Group a contract potentially worth \$1.7 billion as part of a plan to privatize military maintenance jobs for its new search-and-rescue helicopters.

The initial contract, awarded without fanfare several months ago, is valued at \$184 million and would provide maintenance and parts for the new Cormorant helicopters. If IMP completes the contract without a hitch, it has the option to renew it without competition. The Cormorant is built to last about 25 years.

Sixteen-year-old boy stabbed

A 16-year-old boy is taken to hospital with severe stab wounds in his lower abdomen after a Halloween incident in Herring Cove that police later describe as accidental. Tantallon RCMP release few details, but after interviewing the people involved, they do not lay charges.

The only other serious incident reported Halloween night is a six-foot man tackling a 12-year-old boy at the corner of Oxford Street and Coburg Road, and stealing his candy. The boy is not hurt.

Mom, triplets might be here

Crime Stoppers say police believe an Ontario woman might be hiding in the metro area with her seven-year-old triplets, whom she abducted from their home with their father, their legal guardian, in Stratford, Ont., last month. Crime Stoppers got a tip Carline Vandenelsen, 38, was spotted at Halifax International Airport with her children Gray, Olivia and Peter.

Welfare comments strike sparks

Premier John Hamm starts a controversy by telling the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce people on welfare shouldn't be "better off" than working people "struggling ... to make ends meet."

In the legislature, NDP community services critic Kevin Deveau objects to the implied slight to welfare recipients, and suggests Hamm's comments further highlight Nova Scotia's low minimum wage: \$5.60 an hour.

On Thursday Halifax Chebucto NDP MLA Howard Epstein calculates that even at minimum wage, a single person could earn \$11,648 a year by working full-time, but would collect only about \$7,000 on welfare.

Poverty activists deride Hamm in the legislature Friday.

Woman writhes on hospital floor

Marie Peacock of Cole Harbour says she was forced to lie on the floor, vomiting and moaning with pain, at Dartmouth General Hospital's emergency department waiting room on Oct. 27, because there were no beds available while she waited to be treated for kidney stones. The hospital is investigating the incident.

RCMP narrow abuse probe

The numbers keep varying in the continuing investigation of abuse at Nova Scotia's youth centres, but RCMP say they have narrowed their six-year investigation down to 162 suspects. They are looking at 842 allegations of abuse committed against about 440 former residents.

Campbell tried in Wendelborg death

The trial opens for Wanda Lynn Campbell, charged with being an accessory to the murder of William St. Clair Wendelborg. Crown attorney Frank Hoskins alleges Campbell knew her common-law husband, Billy Marriott, planned to inject Wendelborg with a lethal dose of cocaine, and she helped him try to escape justice afterwards.

Wendelborg's body was found in Harrietsfield woods Oct. 20, 1998. Marriott, charged with the murder, was found hanging in his jail cell earlier this year.

On Friday, Crown witness Cindy MacCulloch testifies she doesn't remember making videotaped statements about the murder shortly after Wendelborg's body was found.

Letter embarrasses Parent

Tory Kings North MLA Mark Parent ponders his political future after the NDP leaks a letter Parent wrote to Premier John Hamm criticizing both government plans to move a Kentville health centre, and its lack of relief for drought-stretched Valley farmers.

The next day, after words of support from his constituents and the premier, Parent says he's staying in the legislature.

WCB sues Subway attacker

The Workers Compensation Board files a lawsuit against Michael Derrick Robicheau, who was convicted of common assault on a clerk at a Subway sandwich shop in Halifax last November. The board wants \$4,918 it paid the clerk for benefits, as well as general damages, loss of income and future earning capacity, and legal costs.

Cape Breton cleans up

Cape Bretoners hit hard by the week's heavy rains start to mop up their flooded homes. Jamie Muir, the minister responsible for the Emergency Measures Organization, says he'll look into getting flood relief for homeowners and businesses.

Graphic

Premier John Hamm defends welfare comments in the legislature Wednesday.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: WAGES & SALARIES (90%); LABOR UNIONS (90%); SEXUAL ASSAULT (90%); CRIMINAL FALSE IMPRISONMENT (89%); SEX OFFENSES (89%); PRIVATIZATION (85%); LABOR DISPUTES & NEGOTIATIONS (78%); DRIVER EDUCATION (78%); DEFENSE CONTRACTING (78%); EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS (78%); LEGISLATION (78%); FACTORY WORKERS (78%); CONTRACT AWARDS (78%); AGREEMENTS (78%); PUBLIC CONTRACTING (78%); CONTRACTS & BIDS (78%); SCHOOL VIOLENCE (76%); PLATFORMS & ISSUES (73%); STUDENT HOUSING (71%); WOUNDS & INJURIES (71%); LAW COURTS & TRIBUNALS (67%); SUPREME COURTS (67%); ADMISSIONS & CONFESSIONS (67%)

Company: SYDNEY STEEL MILL (53%)

Organization: AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION (84%); AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION (84%)

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Industry: IRON & STEEL MILLS (89%); DEFENSE CONTRACTING (78%); FACTORY WORKERS (78%); EMERGENCY VEHICLES (74%); HELICOPTERS (63%); FERRIES (57%)

Geographic: HALIFAX, NS, CANADA (79%); NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA (90%)

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