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## Roads less travelled

Secondary roads important for getting people off 100 series and into communities

By Melanie Furlong Special Features Writer

The quality of our roads is one of the first things a visitor to this province is likely to notice. "It's like anything," says Darlene Fiander Grant, president of the Tourism Association of Nova Scotia.

"The way you take care of your place says a lot about you as a destination. It's something that tourists notice when they come to our communities and the secondary roads are very important to getting people off the 100 series and into communities. That's where the businesses are and they're going to spend money there."

Nova Scotia has done a much better job recently of looking after rural roads in Cape Breton, says Carl Baillie, vice-president of Municipal Ready Mix in Sydney.

"In the last two or three years the province has really done a lot of the trails and routes that are important to tourism, especially on the northern side of the island. They've stepped up their budget in that regard."

Baillie says there are plans to do vital work on route 4, a major route between Sydney and Port Hawkesbury, this summer. "They're also continuing with the 100 series upgrade too," says Baillie.

"They've been working on the connector highway from Sydney to the Fortress of Louisbourg for the past four years and the last piece of that is being done this summer."

Grant Fiander says they've seen some major concerns over the last few years with the secondary roads.

"When we do surveys of our industry, one of the things we hear from our customers is that where there are poor areas of road, they hear it from their customers. One of our main advocacy areas is pushing for good roads. What we'd like to see is a more strategic approach to improvements on roads most travelled by residents and visitors. They should be considered when they're deciding on spending on road infrastructure. The secondary roads are crucial to the communities of Nova Scotia."

She says they're very encouraged by the investment over the last year on some of the routes.

"We'll continue to talk to government about how important it is," she says.

"It's a big province. We have a lot of highway and what we would say is that we need some work on the secondary highway. If they're considering doing some work and there are two roads in poor repair but one leads to a major tourism attraction, we would say that should be considered in the decision-making process."

Baillie says he feels the province is doing a good job.

"The budget levels have gradually increased in the last few years and they're getting to a level that will provide Nova Scotians with a good quality road system over the foreseeable future," he says.

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