

ENVIRONMENT

Sheila Cole has a warning for Halifax's decision-makers

BY SARAH SAWLER

Running once every 20 years, Habitat III, the United Nation's conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, affects policy for governments around the globe. And when Quito, Ecuador hosted the 2016 edition in October, Halifax's Sheila Cole was there.

The goal of the conference was to implement the New Urban Agenda: "an

action-oriented document that will set global standards of achievement in sustainable urban development, rethinking the way we build, manage, and live in cities through cooperation with committed partners, relevant stakeholders, and urban actors at all levels of government as well as the private sector."

Cole works in a variety of roles, including senior policy advisor for the Nova Scotia Environmental Network and chair of the Canadian Environmental Network's Health Caucus. "The presentation I was making at UN Habitat was about public engagement and multi-stakeholder decision-making processes," says Cole. "The thrust of the New Urban Agenda is inclusiveness and accessibility and places very much an emphasis on participatory, democratic forms of engagement."

With Halifax in the midst of a wave of development, the subject is timely. According to Cole, Halifax must ensure that communities are engaged in the decision-making processes and that we're taking care to preserve the heritage and natural assets we have now, while also developing in a thoughtful and strategic way.

While Cole says that Halifax is currently a leader in terms of environmental practices, she also says that when it comes to development practices, the city is losing its edge.

"We need to scale back the huge development initiatives that are going on right now," says Cole. She goes on to say that the city is developing too rapidly, and without nearly enough citizen engagement.

"We're losing a lot of the soul of the city by encroaching on historic and established neighbourhoods," she says. "It's willy-nilly development. What we are doing is not desirable. In the very rapid, shocking actually, degree of development that's happening now, we're having tremendous slippage there in terms of the overall integrity of the structure of our city."

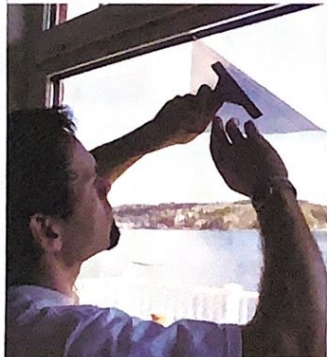
Cole outlines a number of other areas that Halifax needs to work on, based on the discussions at Habitat III.

"We need to formulate our policies and decision-making through the multi-stakeholder process," says Cole. "We need to keep on with our initiatives to make our transportation more accessible and less polluting. We need to work on healthy, affordable housing. We need to protect our parklands and our special places within the city in order to give people places for



UV SHIELD WINDOW FILMS

FAMILY OWNED BUSINESS SINCE 1979 | SERVING THE MARITIMES FOR OVER 130 SEASONS



BLOCK THE RAYS... NOT YOUR VIEW!

Ideal for condos, homes and commercial buildings.

UV window films filter up to 99.9% of all harmful UV rays!

Increase comfort and energy savings year-round.

Protects furniture, floors and artwork from fading.

Professional installation and lifetime warranty.

HALIFAX
902-422-6290

MONCTON
506-855-0855

1-800-667-8468 | www.cooltint.com |



ENVIRONMENT



"WE NEED TO WORK ON HEALTHY, AFFORDABLE HOUSING. WE NEED TO PROTECT OUR PARKLANDS AND OUR SPECIAL PLACES WITHIN THE CITY."
—SHEILA COLE

recreation, but also to protect our ecosystems, for the purposes of protecting air, soil, and water. We need to work on pollution reduction where we can. And we need to focus on food security that links the rural areas with the urban areas."

It's a long to-do list, but it's one Cole is confident we can accomplish, especially since Halifax has a history of taking progressive environmental steps. She names the ones she's been involved in; these include the introduction of non-smoking legislation, the pesticide bylaw, no-scent policies, and environmentally healthy schools.

"This is what people are hungry for and striving for all over the world, and we have already achieved it," she says, speaking about the city's past initiatives. "In terms of the multi-stakeholder process, that it was citizens who led these things is what makes Halifax really different." ■

Halifax
MAGAZINE

ENTER TO WIN



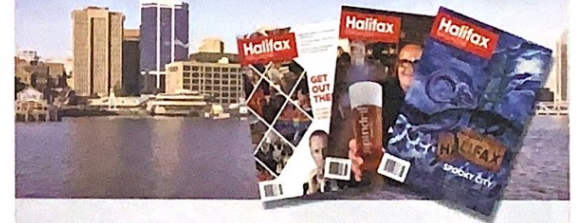
Halifax Magazine and Symphony Nova Scotia are teaming up to give you a chance to experience a holiday classic: enter now for your chance to win two tickets to The Nutcracker Halifax Dance, Mermaid Theatre, and dancers from Ballet Jørgen join Symphony Nova Scotia for performances on December 9 to 11, 15 to 18.



Enter at www.halifaxmag.com
Contest closes December 5, 2016

Halifax
MAGAZINE

Every issue of *Halifax Magazine* reaches **43,600** of the city's most affluent and influential readers



CONTACT US TO ADVERTISE | 902-420-9943
PUBLISHERS@METROGUIDE.CA

halifaxmag.com