



Chair's Column

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Aisle or balcony seats?

By Jo Mark Zurel

This summer's biggest blockbusters were in 3D. People thronged to theatres for a reach-out-and-touch-it, popcorn experience with Captain America, Transformers, Thor and The Smurfs.

Whether the movie was a major blockbuster, like the latest Harry Potter installment, or a big bust, like the latest Pirates of the Caribbean outing, Hollywood banked on 3D to bring in the big bucks this summer.

When 3D movies first launched in the 1950s, they were an innovation; a forward-thinking, futuristic venture that captured the minds of audiences. In the 1980s, when they had a resurgence in popularity, 3D movies always went out of their way to distract the audience with giant objects barreling toward them – a visual treat, but one that never added to the story.

Today, it's a bit of a joke that movie studios indicate their hope for a successful open for a big blockbuster by releasing it in 3D. But joke or not, people are willing to pay to watch the drama unfold behind paper and cellophane, red and blue glasses.

The 3D the Board of Trade has been talking about – debt, demographics and diversification – however, isn't nearly as entertaining as a popcorn matinee, but the two ideas do have lots in common.

The combined solution to the debt, demographics and diversification problems in this province will also have to be innovative, forward thinking and futuristic. This idea will have to capture the minds of the province's people.

It has to be interesting enough that people will line up to hear it, understand it and vote for it.

And when it comes to the future of the province, I think people here want to see something thrilling and satisfying.

While there are 10 days left in this campaign, there will be 1,461 days to the next government's administration. And, on average, government will spend \$20,000,000 each day. Hollywood would only be so lucky.

The question we have to ask as we line up to mark our ballots in a few days, is which party, which candidate, is offering the best 3D solution? Which of the candidates that knocked on your door had a plan to tackle debt?

Which understood the demographic realities we're facing in this province and who had a good idea to deal with it? And finally, which party or candidate promised to put a priority on other industries aside from oil and minerals?

Because just like the giant boulder rolling towards Indiana Jones in Raiders of the Lost Ark, the problems related to debt, demographics and diversification are barreling down on us. And just like the wide open maw of Jaws, they're ready to ruin our day at the beach.

The leaders we choose will either stare blankly in fear and be run over by that boulder or they'll help us narrowly escape the danger so we can go on to another adventure.

When you talk to your candidates, ask about the pressures the labour pool will be under, how much debt we'll share in paying down in the coming years and what resources – human or natural – will be paying for the services we use every day.

Because the biggest difference between the 3D movie industry and the three Ds we're talking about, is that revenues lost to a major flop for a big budget action movie can be replaced by an Oscar-winning drama in the fall and a Christmas kids' flick. In real life, issues raised by carrying too much debt, not dealing with demographic challenges and failing to diversify the economy, isn't weekend fodder; it's people's lives and futures.

We may not be Hollywood, but you see we're seeing the world in 3D too.

Jo Mark Zurel is Chair of the St. John's Board of Trade