

# Donair ads have ex-pats oozing with melancholy

## Tourism sign campaign tugs at heartstrings of Bluenoses

By **CHRIS LAMBIE**  
Staff Reporter

Nova Scotia has bought ads on the streets of Toronto and Calgary taking aim at home-loving Bluenoses who've moved away.

And the arrow's aimed straight at the heart — or at least the heartburn.

The ads, on billboards and bus shelters, show a big green highway sign with an arrow pointing East. Above it is one word: Donairs.

"The purpose of the donair message was to put a smile on the faces of ex-pats driving by," says government spokeswoman Stacey Jones-Oxner.

"We just wanted to remind people about the things that were happening back home."

It seems to be working.

"Well they certainly make me a bit homesick," said Sonya



**A campaign by Nova Scotia Come to Life, the place branding initiative for the province, has placed signs in Toronto directing people toward Donairs, a Nova Scotia treat, via Highway 401.** (ASHLEY HUTCHESON / CP)

Ross, a Nova Scotian living in Toronto. "My boyfriend tries to avoid them; other than that, I love them."

Another Bluenose living in Hogtown liked the donair bill-

boards so much, she snapped a photo. "The sign is amazing," said Lynn Poirier.

"It's at the corner of Bay and Grosvenor streets downtown and as soon as I saw it, I had to

take a picture. I have to also admit, I posted it to Facebook."

Health Canada is worried about how donairs are made, concerned enough to launch a study this month.

Donairs have been linked to three outbreaks of E. coli 0157:H7 in Alberta. The outbreaks have made about 100 people sick since 2004.

But Ms. Poirier's still a fan.

"Try to explain to the people in T.O. the goodness of a donair from Nova Scotia. A donair is not a gyro. You can only get a real donair in Nova Scotia. The sign helps, I can now say, 'See, I told you,' and they get it. I really only come home for the donairs. Well, not really, but it is a bonus."

Besides donairs, the six-week billboard campaign also points East towards the ocean, family, opportunities and Nova Scotia itself.

Ms. Jones-Oxner says donairs stick with you.

While meeting in Boston this week with a group of people who have connections to Nova Scotia, the topic came up in conversation.

"The whole room just went, 'Ah, donairs.'"

"It's something synonymous

with Nova Scotia. It reminds us of home."

Health Canada's announcement this week that it is setting up a working group to figure out how to make donairs safer hasn't tainted the ads as provincial food ambassadors.


Ms. Jones-Oxner, who has

been touring Boston, Toronto, Calgary, Ottawa and Houston in part to try to lure Nova Scotians back home, said the ads are staying put.

As for the donairs themselves, Health Canada will release recommendations early next year.

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