

REES' Pieces

It's Harder to Trust

This is going to be one of the most difficult columns to write since they started appearing 25 years ago. After 46 years in the publishing sector in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, for the first time in my life, I am near the breaking point in losing trust in a group of people so important to our well-being – MLA's in particular.

Late in 2009, I began developing a list of topics for this space, which would highlight the needs and desires of living in small communities.

It began with realizing the NDP government seemed to be favouring Metro Halifax at the expense of rural Nova Scotia. Not long after I started the outline, other writers and columnists in the dailies and on television were expressing the same thoughts.

January focused on Community Spirit using the initiative of Amanda Langille and associates who promoted "The Thirsty Church" in a nation-wide contest for renovation and development funding through the AVIVA Community Fund.

February's theme focused on difficulties for volunteers in "It's the times we're facing". Here's an excerpt from February's column..... "There is a major difference between worrying the cupboard might be bare and realizing there's not even a crumb to be had. That's the position I suggest we are in. Budgets - personal, business and government have been stretched so far, elastic is all but not existent".

March's issue, written in early February, moved on to my version of how "Moving towards Sustainability" would be helpful to volunteers achieve goals for their community, whether maintaining a segment / icon of local heritage, or adapting with the times to keep the community vibrant and of interest to those with young families.

This issue outlined how community groups, church organizations, or a citizens group working to better their community should think outside the box, take charge, and convince themselves the community can and should own it's own destiny.

To succeed community development is based on consultation, visionary planning and sustainability to get "buy-in" from the business community combined with networking with elected officials at three levels of government.

However, proposed subjects for this space got derailed.

First it was the high-handed decision by Prime Minister Harper to shut down parliament until early March, eliminating progress made on legislation on its way to passage through parliament and Senate. Then, closer to home it was the constant amateur decisions being made by a newly elected government, who seemed to be favouring metropolitan areas over rural Nova Scotia.

Provincially, we were promised and elected an NDP government on the strength they would do things better with increased transparency. Since Robert Chisholm almost became premier in 1999, we were slowly convinced they would govern differently.

The NDP were positioned as "squeaky clean" and would change the face of government by bringing it back to the people. Chisholm lost the election because he failed to "come clean" on a driving infraction.

In early February, Auditor General LaPointe released a report, which revealed many MLA's spent money on things which the electorate found hard to accept. The report didn't say so, but many voters perceived some MLA's had been lining their own pockets.

Here's a capsule of the the outcome to date: Nova Scotians are not seeing the level of change promised or expected; Premier Dexter's brand has been severely tarnished and Karen Casey, who was not on the auditor general's list, abandoned a run for the leadership. Karen was thrown under the bus, because it was perceived she did not "rein-in" or defended Richard Hurlburt, in the days, before his resignation as a sitting MLA. The abrupt unexplained resignation of Dave Wilson, MLA, Glace Bay will certainly provide scars on the career of Liberal leader, Stephen McNeil.

The reputation of all MLA's is now suspect. The electorate is hopping mad, and will eventually make a decision on how they want to be represented.

Here's one piece of advice for all party leaders: As a leader you must decide whom to serve. Defending one person can take you down, while looking out for 1000's upon thousands of electors will propel you forward.

Maurice

Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.

MAIL TO: The Shoreline Journal, P.O. Box 41, Bass River, NS, B0M 1B0
(902) 647-2968; Fax: 902-647-2194 Email: maurice@theshorelinejournal.com

Maurice,
Great to read the results of the Thirsty Church in The Shoreline Journal!
We have been wondering how that went and now we know, and that there are some others ways to "win" the prize.
Great story.

Sincerely,
Rev. George & Helen MacLean
Lahave River, Nova Scotia

Dear Editor:
Many thanks for a most informative and interesting paper.

Eileen Eaton, Great Village

Dear Editor:
I really enjoy the Shoreline now. Great Job

Shirley Soley,
Lr Economy, NS

Knowing the Value of a Good Education

By Noel P. Hurley, PhD

Our parents often spoke to us about the importance of getting a good education if we want to be successful and to earn a good living. Many of them were not blessed with the same opportunity that we are presently afforded in this province and indeed in every other province of Canada. Recent reports from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) stated that the Canadian results showed that it is possible to succeed in providing both excellence and equity in public schools. When it comes to choice about children's schooling, the OECD study Pathways to Success provides evidence that no matter what school we choose in Canada for our children to attend, we can expect them to get a good education.

Our students in Canada have scored near the top of OECD countries consistently since the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) began in 1997. The PISA Programme compares educational achievement of 15 year-old students throughout the OECD countries. Follow up studies completed for these students provided evidence that if you read really well at 15 that you are likely to succeed in postsecondary education and in the world of work. These same findings are supported for Nova Scotia schools. We have great teachers in this province who provide positive learning environments in which our students achieve high levels of achievement in safe schools. We achieve this high level of learning, among the best in the world, in spite of having the third lowest per pupil funding in Canada. And incidentally, Canada spends less on public education than nearly all of the OECD countries. If we are doing so well with such poor funding, why should we worry?

We are all aware of the gloomy budget outlook that Finance Minister Graham Steele has been painting over the Nova Scotia fiscal landscape for the past several months. Our concern is that the provincial government might try to use the wrong sector to "bring us back to balance". It has long been known that increasing educational achievement and technological innovation is perhaps the most effective way of growing the economy.

It is logical to borrow money to spend in education and if necessary to increase the deficit to do so. The citizens who will pay back the deficit when a government borrows for education will be the students who will benefit from that borrowing. If we saddle our children with a debt that went to pay for their education it is more acceptable than asking them to pay back for the long-term health care of aging parents and grandparents (like me).

Mr. Steele, if you have to borrow to adequately finance education, Nova Scotians will understand and support your decision. Please do not jeopardize the future prosperity of our province to achieve a short-term political promise to "bring us back to balance." It is more important to develop the economic conditions that will promote the long-term viability of the provincial economy. That can be best done by continuing to ensure that our provincial workforce can compete favourably within the global economy.

It might be time for the provincial government to reconsider the provincial decision to forbid drilling on the Georges Bank. Newfoundland has managed to retrieve many millions of barrels of oil in more rugged conditions with little effect on its marine environment. The selling of drilling permits and the acquisition of equity shares in the development of any discoveries will allow us to prosper in the same way as our younger sister province. We believe you can do it.

Noel P. Hurley, PhD
President, Association of Nova Scotia Educational Administrators

Great Village Farmer's Market

OPENING MAY 22

By Linda Harrington

Spring is here and fresh local produce will soon be a welcome addition to our tables. The Great Village Farmer's Market is a wonderful place to pick up seasonable fresh vegetables, home baking, local crafts and much more.

The Market will be open, beginning May 22nd and then every Saturday until Thanksgiving, from 9:00AM until 1:00PM. Drop by early and enjoy a hearty breakfast, served at Saint James United Church, beginning at 8:30AM.

Several vendors have already signed up but there is always room for more. Tables are \$15 each for those who wish to occasionally set up (pre-registration is necessary). Seasonal memberships are also available. Phone Muffy Webb at 647-2220, for more information.

Current vendors will be offering woodworking, scent free/dye free skin care products, home baking, produce, meat, eggs, fresh flowers, knitting, jewelry and unique crafts.

Later in the season, the Market hopes to offer entertainment. Buskers are welcome to put out their hat but they should pre-register, also.

A meeting will be held on April 7th, 7:00PM, at the Great Village Fire Hall for both current members and anyone interested in becoming a member. Please use the West entry (look for the sign).

The Great Village Market will be located in the parking lot of Saint James United Church, across from the Legion and Fire Hall.

On rainy days the Market will be moved inside the Fire Hall.

Letters to MLA's encouraged

By Chris Urquhart

I have been asked to comment on the state of our dirt roads. They are deplorable. Ruts, pot holes, mud, gravel in the ditches instead of on the roads themselves; the list goes on and on. It is time to write to your local MLA and request the improvements of all our roads. Letters to MLA's don't need postage! They don't know about our problems unless we tell them. Speak up today!

A lot of people are out walking now that the nice weather is here. Have you ever thought about using Walking Poles? Most walking poles have rubber tips that grab the pavement and wrist straps that secure the poles to your arms. With one walking pole in each hand, you grip the handles and push off with each stride. Sturdier walking poles designed for hiking are known as hiking or trekking poles.

Consider the benefits of walking poles: walking poles work your arms, shoulders, chest and upper back muscles through a full range of motion as you walk - which can help you turn your daily walk into a full-body workout.

The arm movement associated with walking poles adds intensity to your aerobic workout, which helps you burn more calories. Walking poles foster balance and stability. Walking poles help you maintain proper posture, especially in the upper back. Walking poles take some of the load off your lower back, hips and knees, which may be helpful if you have arthritis or back problems.

You can find walking poles in various fixed or adjustable lengths online and in many sporting goods stores. Get out and get fit today!

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MAILING ADDRESS: The Shoreline Journal, P.O. Box 41, Bass River, Nova Scotia, B0M 1B0.

PHONE: 902-647-2968; **Fax:** 902-647-2194 **Toll Free** 1-800-406-1426; **Cell:** 902-890-9850 • **E-MAIL:** maurice@theshorelinejournal.com

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