

REES' Pieces

A Worrisome Crossroad?

During the past five+ years Nova Scotia has been performing much better, and Canada-wide our economy has been out performing other provinces. This was particularly noticeable during the devastating CoVid years.

People from across Canada were purchasing their new-Nova Scotia home simply by viewing video footage from a real estate agent. Ironic as it might seem they weren't buying where the lights are bright and neon signs are everywhere.

No they wanted small town, a peaceful rural area, or even farther remote, in areas where Nova Scotians would say, "we have to come out to hunt". It worked for them then and it worked for us, because on a Canada-wide basis, we developed a reputation based on: peaceful, friendly, less expensive and not overcrowded.

The positive attitude of Premier Tim Houston is one of the things that keeps us going today. He hasn't gotten everything right, but he is not afraid to invest money to try to solve a problem, like healthcare, housing and other areas.

I must congratulate him on his opening paragraphs in his column on Page 5.

He writes, "Nova Scotia is a different province than it was 20, 10 and even five years ago. We are now seen as a province of opportunity - a place where young people can build their careers, and where businesses can thrive". I agree with him and could not have written it better.

If he had continued with another couple of sentences, I would have believed "he had read the tea leaves correctly". His next composition should have been, "Recently, there are looming very dark black clouds, which could be devastating for all non-urban and rural areas, and I am worried".

We know weather patterns have changed in the last five years. Recall, white Juan, wildfires, last July's heavy rainstorm which washed out roads, flooded major areas, putting people in Bedford, Lr Sackville, Mount Uniacke and Windsor in great danger, then recently when all of Cape Breton, including Sydney received over 100 mm snow.

The worry, particularly for smaller towns and rural areas is how the print media world has been affected by social media platforms and two years of Covid. The real worry for those non-urban areas is the potential demise of the Saltwire publishing empire, with a debt load of \$67-Million. They own all the dailies in Nova Scotia, PEI, and Newfoundland, plus all community newspapers in NFLD and most of them in Nova Scotia.

The real economic albatross is for rural areas. The dailies might be scooped up by an Ontario publishing group - speculation has Post Media, leader of the pact. The only prized jewel might be the Chronicle Herald, if the Saltwire team can't find a solution. This could leave the weeklies and community newspapers among the ashes. Result: our largest towns, Amherst, Truro and New Glasgow without a newspaper.

It was 60 years last October when I entered this profession. The other day I jotted down the names of almost 20 Nova Scotia Communities who proudly had a weekly / community newspaper. In New Brunswick, if I remember correctly there were 13 locally owned publications. I can't remember all the names. At that time I knew all owners and senior staff by first name.

If you say, print media is dead, you are wrong. It is the only media, which delivers constituent provable results. If you were talking about the real big city media, they might have a shorter life span.

Rural areas need a local print media. Otherwise, they have no way to communicate with themselves or with adjoining communities to invite them to a church supper or know what is happening. Governments need local print media to communicate with taxpayers.

Imagine Truro without a newspaper to print photos of floats in the Santa Clause Parade.

Papers for rural areas can be profitable, but they have to be scooped up before the burn pile. Those who will force the issue are the rural residents whose concern will force governments, well healed business executives to make it possible so rural areas can be owners and make it work.

With fingers and toes crossed, here's hoping.

Maurice

Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.

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Letter to Editor - Harvey MacEachern

Do We Matter?

After talking to almost fifty of my Little Dyke neighbours in the community of Glenholme, NS a number of concerns over OSCO's proposed Pit No. 4 extension project surfaced. Concerns in terms of decreasing respondent frequency are: road safety (67%), water quality (59%), noise pollution (57%), property value (50%), and natural habitat/air quality (both 48%). Both natural habitat and air quality rose to the 1st and 3rd position when considering where they were ranked in priority versus just frequency.

I learned a lot about my neighbours over the last several weeks. I could hear, feel, and almost taste the love they have for their community and its rural way of life. Unfortunately, many feel like it is a futile exercise to stand up and speak out against this constant march forward to the next inevitable Big Dig. I've been struggling back and forth with their despair and having hope for reasonable and progressive change to sand and gravel mining in the future.

How do you balance being a good neighbour, having respect for a local company whose operated for over 30 years, and standing up to prevent or at least slow down the next sacrifice zone in NS?

As a summer resident for more than 25 years, and a recent permanent resident who plans to ride out retirement in this rural paradise - I want my children, if they so choose, to enjoy Little Dyke for decades. That's my skin in the game.

So with all of those sentiments I have really big difficult questions.

Why here? I know Glenholme gravel and sand is high quality and is strategic in provincial economic growth but at what cost to the local community? Are there other locations with similar highway access to supply all of Nova Scotia but with no residential impact?

Does it stop? With the most recent purchase of land on the west side of Little Dyke Road, it looks like plans for Pit No. 5 are brewing. With the price offered per acre for prospective gravel excavation, I'm guessing more residents, and justifiably so, will give serious thought to selling out and cashing in. Serene views of lake, bay, and colourful farm fields may soon be replaced by a 360 degree view of gravel piles.

Do we matter? Community feedback leads me to believe more than 90% of Little Dyke residents are opposed to the Pit No. 4 extension project. I call on local politicians, and more specifically the NS Minister of Environment, to have a visit. You, me, and the dog can walk around the lake counting ducks or strain to see if the Loon babies have arrived. We can stroll down to the Bay to watch sandpipers dance. We can smell the newly turned soil ready for planting. We can walk around the trails hearing the tide roll up the bay from miles away. If you're up to it, we can all jump into the lake for a quick invigorating dip! Listen to what we are saying, and be our "Tank Man".

Do We Matter?
Harvey MacEachern

Letter to Editor - Health Boards
To the editor:

On behalf of Nova Scotia's 35 volunteer-led Community Health Boards (CHBs) we want to congratulate and thank the Provincial Government for announcing a universal school lunch program for all Nova Scotian students announced in the recent budget.

Children cannot learn when they are hungry which is why this announcement is so welcome. CHBs across Nova Scotia have been involved in the conversation about food security for many years. Our last five-year health plan recommended in that CHBs work with community partners to advocate for investments that benefit all students equitably, such as a National School Food program. Recently demand for food security supports have risen sharply, including for school food programs. Between 2018 and 2022, CHBs supported hundreds of community-based food security projects with funding from their Wellness Fund grant program. We gave out \$965,000 in grants for food security initiatives, of which \$630,000 was for school food projects. That amounts to roughly a quarter of our \$2.7 million total grant budget over this five-year period.

Individual Wellness Fund grants are small amounts of money - on average about \$2,000 per grant - but we know they have

meant so much to the many volunteer-led school food programs throughout Nova Scotia. The school food volunteers showed tenacity, creativity and passion as they cobbled together funds they raised themselves along with other donations and grants - including grants from Community Health Boards - to sustain a patchwork of school food supports. This new provincial program surely comes as welcome relief and reward for all their hard work.

In 2023 many CHBs wrote to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development in support of a universal school food program. We are thrilled the Province has moved forward on this critically important child health issue and we hope our advocacy efforts played some small part to encourage this positive policy. We are also thrilled that this is a universal program which means no one will be stigmatized for participating.

Sincerely,

Mildred MacDonald
Co-chair
Provincial Council of CHB Chairs

Rhonda Frank
Co-chair
Provincial Council of CHB Chairs

The Shoreline Journal (circ. 1650) is a monthly community newspaper serving communities along the Glooscap Trail from Truro to Parrsboro, Nova Scotia serving the communities of Belmont/Debert, Wentworth/Londonderry, Onslow/Masstown along the shore to Great Village, Bass River, Economy, Five Islands and Lower Five Islands. It is published on the last Wednesday of each month (earlier in December) with a deadline of the 20th of the month.

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