

REES' Pieces

Stupid political move: Savings vs Cost-cutting

Politics and the political world is a bare knuckles brawl at the best of times. Sometimes more so than others. This is that time and much more will be uncovered as the verbal battles intensify and lead to what could be massive public demonstrations.

A couple political decisions, made in the last couple of years, which I will use as examples are up against Houston's 2026/2027 super majority \$1.2-Billion deficit budget, which is filled with 100's of program expenditure reductions; eliminating many programs; drastically reducing aid to local book publishers; closures of 12 museums and much more.

Before I get into the weeds with precise savings / deficit cuts, one must understand the voting public are up in arms, like never before. During the 15-month "stay-at-home" period of Co-Vid we formed a new habit of not being satisfied and expecting more.

Many expected / hoped / insisted the \$2,000 per month stipend should continue even after we were free to roam about and jobs which had been shelved were coming back. In those few short 4-5 years many wage earners at the bottom of the ladder either didn't want to continue unless wages rose from circa \$14.00 to new heights. As a result, it didn't take long before, in order to get employees, people were earning \$20 to serve coffee at a drive-thru.

Attitudes became so entrenched some refused to re-enter the work force or insisted on a change to a higher position, or sought training to improve their skills. The result a dramatic attitudinal shift approaching 180 degrees.

That drastic change holds true on how we view governments and politicians. We expect more; loathe them even more; please communicate with us and make more practical decisions and less political edicts.

For many it is not so much what was cut, but how it happened or didn't happen along the way. Being treated like a piece of disposable plastic film from a package of meat, by not communicating with us is what bothers us the most. As a word of caution to all those elected, we will not give you permission to "blind-side" us again.

The electorate is so upset and irate, they are starting to get set their ways and will definitely "keep their elbows up". The first lesson, starting today, which all the elected need to understand and learn is they have never experienced the intensity of "push back" they are about to face, even from their most loyal supporters.

Across the province, the electorate either as individuals, or in groups such museum lovers, volunteers to community organization are just starting to "gel together" to battle the super majority ruling Houston conservatives.

If the rumour mills and pundits are as close to being accurate as it currently is we are in for a spring and summer filled with public disruption.

We, won't have to look south of the border for political battles or side show, we will have our own, "Made in Nova Scotia" version.

We are near the tipping point to go beyond what people ever thought Nova Scotians would reach with public protests against government.

Let me set the table with examples illustrating why Nova Scotians are so irate.

It basically boils down to the point within the last two years the government eliminated fees / tolls on then Cobequid Pass and Halifax-Dartmouth bridges and how those savings caused today's cuts to be even deeper and more severe.

Following the last provincial election the Houston government removed the tolls on Cobequid Pass for Nova Scotia vehicles, while retaining the toll booth operators. Opened in 1997, tolls paid the private developer-contractors who financed and maintained the highway during the amortization period.

In the last year of the tolls, \$19 million in revenues were collected with about \$12 million going toward expenses such as maintenance and capital costs. The \$7-million surplus would have paid for 7 years what the government is saving by closing 12 of 28 historic sites and museums.

Ironic that after 25 plus years tolls became so much of a problem they needed to be eliminated. A better solution would have been to provide a transponder for all vehicles within 15 Km radius of the toll plaza. Handled differently, the \$7-Million surplus could have been used to keep the museums open, plus the remaining \$6-million for much needed highway improvements elsewhere.

How much money was saved by eliminating tolls on the Halifax-Dartmouth bridges? What did it cost to re-construct the toll plaza on the Dartmouth side? In 2024 tolls exceeded \$36,511,000. Today, the 36-Million has evaporated. Where will be that money, needed for maintenance, be sourced? At least 50%-60% of the evaporated toll revenue should be charged back to HRM residents. They constantly use the bridge, we don't.

Nearly 300 community programs and organizations were hit hard, including 127 grants completely eliminated to reduce or cut \$130 million for the 2026-27 fiscal year. Public pressure has caused Houston to reinstate \$53.6 Million in Grants, and Funding. The ill-conceived highway and bridge toll slashing on Cobequid Pass and HRM bridges in 2025 totals over \$43-million.

It is hard to understand the rationale how someone who was acclaimed to be a very brilliant chartered account could make such poor decisions after entering public service.

Maurice

Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.

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Dear supporters of the Joggins Fossil Cliffs UNESCO World Heritage Site,

We are writing to you today with devastating news.

Last week, the Province of Nova Scotia announced a significant decrease in funding for Communities, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage (CCTH). These cuts have resulted in a 20% reduction to our provincial operation grant for the Joggins Fossil Cliffs. This loss has had an immediate and devastating effect on our small but mighty organization. Many of our planned outreach events are on hold or cancelled as we have been scrambling to make up this loss with mere weeks until the start of the new fiscal year. We are a small team of four year-round employees who are doing the work of a team sev-

eral times our size. These cuts could result in loss of staff, a greatly diminished outreach program, and a reduced capacity to participate in important initiatives like the recently announced Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) funded Atlantic Canada Tourism Corridor. Additionally, these cuts may affect our ability to operate as a fully functioning tourism destination during our peak season.

CCTH is an integral part of the fabric of Nova Scotia. Museums, UNESCO-designated sites, heritage sites, and other tourist destinations brought \$3.7 billion dollars to the Nova Scotia economy in 2025. In 2024, Nova Scotia welcomed 2 million visitors, and in exit in-

terviews the Joggins Fossil Cliffs were listed as one of the top attractions that tourists visited and enjoyed. All in all, tourism represents 2.7% of Nova Scotia's GDP, and it is concerning that the Province of Nova Scotia is refusing to invest in tourism when the outcomes are so positive.

How can you help?

The budget hasn't passed yet. There is still time to join the campaign to email and call your MLA (if you live in Nova Scotia), the Premier's office, the finance minister, and the CCTH minister. You can find their contact information here. We recommend using a template letter, like the one written by the Association of Nova Scotia Muse-

ums. Attend a rally if you can and follow along in the media as they share stories of organizations, like us, that will be negatively impacted by this provincial budget.

Thank you,
The Joggins Fossil Cliffs
UNESCO World Heritage Site

OP-ED

Nova Scotia is Canada's Defence Leader

Nova Scotia has a long and proud history of defending our country and our allies - in the air, on land and at sea. When Canada has called, Nova Scotians have answered. Today is no exception, but this moment is different.

Canada is embarking on unprecedented defence investments. Driven by a changing global security environment and renewed commitments to our allies, the federal government is preparing to spend hundreds of billions of dollars to rebuild and modernize the Canadian Armed Forces and defence capability.

We are uniquely positioned to lead. And we are acting decisively to make sure Canada's defence future is built and sustained here.

Why Nova Scotia? Because defence capability isn't something you can create overnight. It depends on skilled people, purpose-built infrastructure, industrial capacity and a leading-edge research and development hub - and Nova Scotia has spent generations building all four.

We are home to Canada's largest military base by population, with more than 13,000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces and another 17,000 Nova Scotians working in defence and aerospace companies. We have the highest defence employment per capita in the country and the highest defence GDP per capita. This isn't an emerging sector for us - it's a proven one.

That foundation is already

attracting investment. At CFB Greenwood and CFB Halifax, the federal government is moving ahead with major investments in upgrades that ensure our bases remain operationally critical for decades to come. At the same time, steel is being cut on the Riverclass destroyers in Halifax, the most advanced warships Canada has ever built, anchoring thousands of skilled jobs and a national shipbuilding supply chain in our province.

COVE, our internationally recognized marine innovation hub, located on Halifax's deep, ice-free harbour, is now home to Canada's first Defence Innovation Secure Hub. NATO's decision to locate its North American Defence Innovation Accelerator (DIANA) in Halifax speaks volumes about the strength of our ecosystem and the trust our allies place in Nova Scotia's capabilities.

And this is just the beginning.

The Province of Nova Scotia is partnering with Canada as they prepare to acquire new submarines, expand naval capacity and modernize coastal defence. Nova Scotia is the premier place in the country to support the Canadian Armed Forces with front-to-

back solutions - from construction, manufacturing and maintenance to training and innovation. We are supporting our local defence companies so they can scale, innovate and compete. And we are investing in the conditions that the defence industry needs to keep succeeding: skilled workers, research partnerships and modern infrastructure.

What's at stake is significant.

This defence investment wave could bring billions of dollars to Nova Scotia, create thousands of well-paying jobs, strengthen our national security and secure long-term economic growth for communities across the province.

Nova Scotia has never waited to be told to step up. We have earned our reputation as Canada's defence leader through action, commitment and results. Now, as Canada looks to rebuild and strengthen its defence capabilities, we are also ready to do so again.

Nova Scotia is Canada's defence leader, and we will lead.
Colton LeBlanc is Nova Scotia Minister of Growth and Development.

Also see the OP-EDs on pages 6 and 7.

The Shoreline Journal welcomes your story contributions

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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Rath Eastlink Comm Centre
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