

# REES' Pieces

## Dog days of Summer are coming

With some of the high heat and extreme humidity, we have already had a taste of what will be ahead during the annual infliction of "Dog Days of Summer". If it has been a while since you have heard the term, think back to how you felt for a few days a week or so ago.

Those are the required days in August to give field crops and our gardens the heat units and cooling overnights a quick rush towards maturity and can happen anytime once the strawberry season is over. The high temps and humidity with cooling overnight also contributes to why so many save their vacation until August. They are also a prelude to Nova Scotia's hurricane season, if we are to experience one and a reminder "School's In" is just around the corner.

We are a little over a month away from the "crazy" six weeks of a federal election campaign. I'm not going to comment on the possible outcome, because everyone has either a belief or hope. Political pollsters have been busy gearing up for the mad rush to determine who is up, who is down, and what is trending.

All I wish is campaigns stay as respectful as possible, and when it comes time to vote, Canadians will exercise their option to vote, which is not possible for millions of people around the world.

Residents, politicians and business leaders in Cumberland-Colchester are keeping their fingers crossed hopeful Develop Nova Scotia will approve the application made by the two-county chosen ISP provider. I know a bit about the background leading to the end of June \$-multi-million submission, but have not been privy to the details now be explored by the folks in Halifax.

Nova Scotia's approach to announcing or choosing an ISP provider to implement a province-wide rural high speed internet program by Develop Nova Scotia is a mammoth task. DNS is in the process of evaluating proposals submitted at the end of June.

However, my worry stems from my observation Nova Scotia seems to be falling far behind New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. A delay will put businesses in a less competitive position with our neighbours also announcing plans for 5G ready service later this fall.

In an announcement on July 25<sup>th</sup>, Xplornet will invest \$80-Million and the Federal Government will invest \$40-Million to deliver 5G ready technology to 83,000 homes and businesses. Within the last year, both NB and PEI have made announcements selecting Xplornet to be the leader for province-wide high-speed rural internet service.

Nova Scotia is a Canada-wide leader in recycling and waste going into landfills which is a tremendous feat for environment concerns. However, the achievement rings very hollow if we can't get our act together and develop a plan to ensure our rural businesses are competitive when it comes to internet service.

Great the province created the \$193-Million Internet Fund, but it's only useful if people who know and understand the needs of Rural Nova Scotians. There are many who feel DNS is trying to have a slower implementation plan, which would assist Canada's largest ISP providers by parceling out the assistance at a pace which will match incremental budget increases of the "Big Boys".

Nova Scotia's rural areas need 5G ready internet service as soon as humanly possible to build-out. Many internet savvy professionals feel our great province is quickly falling behind, and there is too much "micro-management" in play by staff who don't know and understand the pressures rural areas are under.

If you talk to Tom Taggart, municipal councillor, real-estate agent, and member of the Board of Directors of Federation of Canadian Municipalities he will tell you studies show if rural areas had internet service almost equal to service in urban areas, rural areas across Canada will see tremendous growth within the next decade.

What many people don't realize is with an increase in number of professionals capable of working from home; a more relaxed life-style, not to mention lower real-estate and housing costs, the only thing holding back a rural rebuild is lack of internet service.

I've still got my fingers crossed, Cumberland-Colchester will have 5G ready internet service soon.

Maurice

# Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.

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### To the Editor,

I try to live a pretty healthy lifestyle. I exercise, eat healthy and do my best to make good choices. But, like many others, when life gets busy and I find myself needing a food fix, the best intentions too often go out the drive thru window.

Confession: This actually happened just this week. I was attending meetings, got busy and on the way home, I did what every person does and got an easy paper bag meal. It got me thinking, which can happen on my long drives (And believe me there is a lot of them) how often we have the time and ability to eat healthy but, yet, we often resort to less healthy alternatives.

Whatever the reasons may be, it's those choices throughout our

lives that can cause health risks as we age. There are really two components to a healthy population — one is treating illness and injury, the other is prevention through promoting healthy choices.

A previous PC government created a separate Department of Health Promotion. My friend and colleague Pat Dunn is a former Minister of this Department. Its mission was to promote healthy lifestyles based on the knowledge that a healthier population would ultimately lead to lower healthcare costs. It was very successful, particularly in helping young Nova Scotians understand the risks of smoking.

Unfortunately, the NDP nixed the Department and folded it back into the Department of Illness Management known now as the

Department of Health and Wellness.

Over time, governments have lost touch with the fact that improved focus on healthy living puts a priority on health promotion, health education and access to information. We need to find ways to encourage people and help them lead healthier lifestyles.

Government thinks too much about treating illness and not enough about preventing them in the first place. It's not enough to immediately eliminate the crisis in healthcare but in the long run, it would help ease the burden on the system that will frankly, only become more strained as our population ages.

Sincerely, Tim Houston  
Leader, Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative Party

## OP-ED

### Op-Ed - Bridging the Divide in Forestry By Hon Iain Rankin

Forestry has been part of the foundation of our economy for many decades and has experienced significant changes over time. It is time for this industry to change once again.

A cultural shift is underway that will transform how we value and manage our forests. It's a move that fully embraces the true meaning of ecological forestry. This industry needs to bridge the divide between a sustainable path forward and achieving better environmental standards.

At times, I hear misunderstanding from all sides in this sector. However, I am optimistic we can reach a place where everyone involved sees the importance of increasing our efforts to conserve biodiversity and wildlife.

We will get there by being thoughtful, respectful and most importantly by working together. I believe we will find a practical plan that will deliver better ecological outcomes in the forest. We will preserve the richest biodiversity we have by focusing more on multi-age management of the forest and preserving long-lived, mixed species. It is not simply about balancing economy and environment because without the environment there is no economy.

Already, we can see real improvements are starting to happen in our forests by putting the focus on ecology and biodiversity first.

Since December, we've been using a retention guide on tree harvesting that puts greater focus on preservation when harvest decisions are being made. Over the summer we will update that guide with valuable feedback from our stakeholders.

We also have project management teams that include the people who were instrumental in offering advice to the guide's main author, Prof. William Lahey. This sector is important for the generations of families that have been employed throughout the province. It's also a key part of products we all use daily in our homes and offices like furniture, paper products and building materials.

In order to improve the way we respect the biodiversity of the forest, we need to recognize that industry is willing to modernize and adapt again. Government's role is to create the conditions for mutual respect. This requires patience and perseverance. If we are successful, we all benefit.

The United Nations recognizes that biodiversity is under threat in every region of the world. That means everyone - communities, industry, non-governmental organizations and First Nations - has a

role to play in protecting it.

The Mi'kmaq are now answering that call by managing more than 20,000 hectares of land, which was a key recommendation in the Lahey report. On June 25, we held our first broad stakeholder engagement session, and it was clear that Nova Scotians want to work together to achieve the goals of that report.

By following the most up-to-date science, we can improve conservation efforts while respecting the need for products we all use. It's in all of our interests that greater consideration be given not only to species at risk, but to all wildlife habitat.

Today, we still use clearcutting as the default approach far too often. There is a place for this approach, but only when the science shows that it can be "ecologically acceptable in certain circumstances", as many stakeholders have suggested. For now, our guidelines work to retain the most important trees.

I realize that leaving our partners in the dark evaporates trust and faith. That's why I will always welcome respectful feedback that focuses on this very important task.

Together we can meet the challenge of nurturing a healthy forest, respecting one of the oldest industries in Nova Scotia and ensuring our children can enjoy one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world.

Iain Rankin is Nova Scotia Lands and Forestry Minister

## Improving Rural Connectivity

### By Maurice Rees

The Honourable Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, announced on July 23, the introduction of smaller spectrum service areas, which will make it more economical for service providers, particularly smaller providers in rural areas, to access the spectrum they need to deliver telecommunications services

Having the flexibility to access spectrum on a smaller scale will enable new uses and business cases that will be supported by 5G technologies, including enhanced connectivity in industrial parks and remote worksites

Cumberland and Colchester Counties have partnered with a USP provider and have a multi-million dollar application

under consideration by Develop Nova Scotia. This new program might be useful to attract the needs of smaller communities or remote areas which the current application might not include or to assist smaller service providers an opportunity to in small projects.

In addition, he announced a decision to modernize the fees for point-to-point radio licenses. Modernizing these fees will support the development of 5G and benefit rural communities, where broadband deployment depends on the use of point-to-point systems. The new fee model is designed to promote more efficient spectrum use and reduce license fees, making it more economical for providers to deliver services to Canadians.

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