

REES' Pieces

H1N1 & Education Problems

There have been times choosing a subject for this column has been a difficult task. This month has been one of them. Throughout the month, it appeared the preferred topic would be the H1N1 delivery fiasco.

After careful consideration, this month's space will occupy two subjects, H1N1 and our education system.

H1N1 has occupied everyone's mind; so much so, people are getting weary just hearing about it. The entire matter has taken on "the sky is falling" syndrome.

There are four groups of people for whom compassion should be noted.

First, families who have suffered loss of a loved one, or suffered several illness. Secondly, thousands who were forced to stand in line for hours to get punctured by a needle. Thirdly, employers facing loss or productivity from those who are ill or those standing in line so they don't become ill.

Last, but not least, are the front line people who have been staffing the clinics and puncturing our arms and facing wrath of the public.

Give governments their credit. They are adept at creating a stampede.

They've put enough fear in us, that we stampeded into long lineups for 5-6 hours without assurance we would get vaccinated that day. Let's hope, we never suffer a real emergency or massive disaster. The wheels of government failed and failed drastically to adequately get us vaccinated without a lot of hassle.

They tried to re-invent the wheel. To set up clinics, and have them staffed, why didn't they call upon Elections Canada to use their infrastructure? Elections Canada has demonstrated it is capable of handling us when we stampede to the polls on one day.

The Elections Canada machinery could have been used to set up clinics at each of the poll locations, get qualified people from the local area to work the "front end". Local residents could easily have been trained to handle the admissions, while medically qualified people could have punctured us.

The Elections Canada database could have been used to send us mailings specifying where the clinics were located in our area, and when we should appear. No privacy would have been breached, and the matter handled with much less fuss and confusion. And it probably would have been less expensive.

I decided not to use the entire space on H1N1 when more cynical thoughts started to surface. Someone suggested that perhaps the total focus on H1N1 might have been an attempt to cause us not to think about the economy and the lack of political leadership which, if functioning properly would see us all employed and well at the same time.

Now, onto more comments about our education system.

Last month's column, which is not the first opinion piece questioning our education system, seems to be the leader of the pack in current discussions. Education and its outcomes for younger and older students is a subject debated for decades, but with little more of an outcome than lip service.

No sooner had last month's column got into the public's hands, and Stephen Lund, CEO, Nova Scotia Business Inc, opened the can of worms even wider during his address to Truro Chamber of Commerce members.

Lund told the Truro CoC attendees our education system is letting students down. Almost concurrently, Elizabeth Beale, President and CEO of the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council concluded in her paper to the Economic Advisory Panel report to Nova Scotia Government the improving adult literacy will be "key stimulus to increasing productivity".

Then, Roger Taylor in his November 12th column in the Chronicle Herald added more fuel to the fire, by adding his comments to the Lund and Beale revelations.

Beale's comments about the need and only lip service being paid becomes reality in West Colchester with the problems being faced by the Colchester Adult Learning Association (CALA) in their attempt to deliver adult learning program in Great Village.

Program funding for the dozen or so adult students has been cut so drastically, formalized instruction has been cut in half; instructors are volunteering services or expenses, travel and childcare subsidy for students is slashed. To keep going, the program needs the \$20,000.00 cut from the budget reinstated.

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

Dear Maurice:

While I agree, for the most part, with your thoughts on "Are Students Challenged?" I do have some other points that should be noted as well. I don't know that our education system isn't so much not challenging the student as it is not meeting all the students' needs.

As much as 10% of the population do not learn the way others do. It certainly isn't because they are not intelligent. Unfortunately, our society measures intelligence with academics and this just isn't a true measure. As you look around the community you'll see some very intelligent people who didn't do well academically in school.

If God made all children the same you could use that measure but I thank Him everyday that He didn't because then we wouldn't have had people like Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln and the list goes on and on. These people were well known dyslexics who didn't do well in all areas of academics in school.

While I do agree that a change is needed and needed soon, I don't believe starting to fail kids again is the answer. Nor do I agree that one standardized system would be the answer either since not all children learn the same way. Having said that, no, I don't know what the answer is either, but I do know we do have some pretty remarkable teachers in our system that make the most of what they can on a minimal budget, large class load, and time constraints. Not only the day to day teachers but the special Ed teachers and EA's, who do see and can, bring out the best in all students.

It's also been my experience that those students who do little work, know they will be going on to the next grade, and the one's who don't know they will be going on for sure, are the ones who do the most work. I realize you are speaking in general terms, and if we could take every child and categorize them into one box, that would work, but there's always going to be those few who just don't fit in that box. They are the "outside of the box" thinkers, who if given the right encouragement and instruction can probably come up with the most amazing ideas, i.e. the gentlemen I

mentioned above.

In summary then, is it fair to fail a potential genius who if given an I.Q. test it could possibly be one of the highest in the class, and should we squash what little self esteem they have left because they don't do as well as the other children academically?

Thank you, those are my thoughts.

Betty Jennings, Debert

Hi Maurice,

That was a fine article on Jodi DeLong's visit to West Colchester Consolidated. Linda really covered all the bases. It is especially important to recognize the efforts of the Writers Federation of Nova Scotia's Writers in the Schools program in bringing writers to our often remote rural schools. Thanks again.

Trish Rubin

Dear Maurice:

I will try and outline the schedule of services coming up on the pastoral charge. As you know, the three congregations through much discussion and discernment over the last two years have agreed to close their churches and come together in an amalgamation to form one new congregation. We are in the process of choosing a new name which should be known after a meeting of the three congregations on November 26.

Along with our Christmas Eve services which will be held in all three churches with myself present as minister, we are also offering three de-commissioning services with representation from Truro Presbytery which has oversight over the pastoral charge. These services serve to effectively close the three churches as they now exist.

By decision of the joint congregations, the effective date of the new congregation to be established on the current Onslow site is January 1. On that day we plan to offer a New Year's Levy to the community to allow friends and dignitaries to wish us well in our new beginnings. Then the first inaugural service as a newly constituted congregation of the United Church of Canada will be Sunday, January 3, 2010.

So, I will outline the services, dates and times, below:

Christmas Eve Services:

Wesley/Belmont UC,
Thursday, December 24, 4 PM;
Lower Onslow UC, Thursday,
December 24, 5:30PM and

Onslow UC, Thursday,
December 24, 7:00PM

De-Commissioning Services:

Wesley/Belmont UC, Sunday,
December 27, 7:00PM;
Lower Onslow UC, Monday,
December 28, 7:00PM and
Onslow UC, Tuesday,
December 29, 7:00PM.

New Year's Levee: Friday, January 1, 2010, Time TBA.

Inaugural Worship Service:

Sunday, January 3, 2010,
Time TBA

The church buildings in Belmont and Lower Onslow are under the oversight of the trustees of the respective congregations and the work of determining a future use for these decommissioned church buildings will be the work of the trustees into 2010.

Thank you for your interest in the on-going life of the church here on the Onslow-Belmont Pastoral Charge.

Sincerely,

**Rev. Gerald A. Kerr, Minister
Onslow-Belmont Pastoral Charge
E-mail: obunited@eastlink.ca**

Dear Maurice:

After reading your excellent article "Are Students Challenged?", I had to write that I agree with your views.

I grew up in Montreal and did my primary grades in French. All the schools had to follow the same curriculum, the exams were written on the same day in every school, and the exams were prepared by the Montreal School Board.

We also had school inspectors dropping in without notice throughout the school year asking students questions on the topics we had covered to make sure the teachers were up-to-scratch with their teachings and following the curriculum assigned to them. Our classes consisted of 38 to 45 students per class. Somehow, the teacher had time for someone having problems. We also had to wear school uniforms, everyone was dressed the same.

The reason I know this, we moved often and different schools and yet the teaching was the same.

Nobody was shuffled up a grade unless they passed, 60%

was the bottom of a passing grade. Anything below, repeated the grade and not too many students repeated a grade. The teachers were strict but helpful if you needed extra help; discipline and behavior were a must in the classroom. And God forbid if you were disciplined in school and your parents found out, you were disciplined at home also. You were taught to be responsible for your actions and to respect your elders. In the neighbourhoods I grew up, we had friends of various races and creeds, you learned early to respect others. May be there is something to be said for older times.

Micheline Sterling, Belmont

Reader's comments.

Sometimes, we would like to "blow our own horn" a bit more, but we try to refrain from doing so. However, there are times, when comments from subscribers are so frequent, we continue to realize we are doing things right.

Recently, Linda Harrington and I have received so many comments from readers; I thought it would be appropriate to publish a few of them. Here's a few of the comments received during the past month:

"Really enjoyed the articles on Fred being in the movie & the cranberry bog feature.....nice to read about local events & happenings."

"Enjoying the new shoreline, seems to be much more coverage."

"Love your photos; the one of the Church was really nice."

"You did a great job on the article about the grape harvest."

"Thank you for giving us so much positive PR!! We really do have such a great school and it is nice to see that portrayed in the local media."

"Great article on Fred Hamilton in the Moby Dick movie."

The subscribers remain unidentified, but they know who they are.

Maurice Rees, Publisher

Memorial Service December 6

Mattatall ~ Varner Funeral Home will be hosting their annual Christmas Memorial Service in honour of loved ones who have passed away. The service will be held 2:30 p.m., Sunday, December 6, at

Mattatall~Varner Funeral Home, 55 Young Street, Truro.

Refreshments will follow. Monetary donations and non-perishable food donations will be accepted for the Colchester Food Bank.

The Shoreline Journal (circ. 1300) 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.

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

EDITOR PUBLISHER: Maurice Rees • **ADVERTISING & CIRCULATION:** Dorothy Rees

Canadian Publications Mail Products Agreement #4686039, ISSN #1209-9198

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

LOCAL SUBSCRIPTIONS: B0M / B2N - \$23.00, PLUS HST = \$25.99 • **ALL PARTS OF NS:** \$26.00 plus HST = \$29.38

ALL OTHER AREAS OF CANADA: \$28.00, plus HST = \$31.64 • **USA SUBSCRIPTIONS:** \$40.00

HST: #890564404RT001. Printed by Advocate Printing & Publishing Ltd, Pictou, Nova Scotia

All rights reserved. Material published in The Shoreline Journal may not be reproduced in an form without prior approval of the publisher. Material to be returned to sender must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

1996 Heritage Award recipient. Listed with Canadian Advertising Rates & Data (CARD) and Bowden's Media Monitoring Service.

The publisher is not responsible for minor errors in ads, which do not lessen the value of the item(s). The publisher is not responsible for space beyond that portion of the advertisement containing the item(s) in error. Letters to the editor are subject to editing or rejection, must be signed by the author and contain a phone number.

