REES' Pieces

Watching the brawl from the sidelines

In Nova Scotia, and I suspect in most provinces, it is not hard to show distain for the provincial electrical utility. In our case Nova Scotia Power and its parent, Emera. A summation of our thoughts is they charge too much; top executives earn too much; they treat us rudely and never show compassion. We feel powerless to mount any opposition.

To most of us it appears they have the government of the day in their hip pockets and the government gives them exactly what the request. Our only hope is the Utility and Review Board (UARB) is permitted to act independently and when decisions are handed down, we want to believe any rulings are in the best interest of all parties.

More times than not, our faith is tested, because we fail to understand how, "it is fair to us". Regardless of the multitude of decisions made by the UARB we've never been given a solid reason to think otherwise – "they were acting independently without any external influence".

Instead of jumping all over NS Power and Emera maybe it's time to do some serious thinking. It appears that in fall of 2022 going forward things may have changed and may not continue to be as we "believed for decades".

I think it's time to pick a spot on the sidelines and watch the oncoming bloody brawl. It's not going to be pretty, and definitely not in our best interests. We are still reeling from the savage destruction from Hurricane FIONA. While still fresh in our memory it's easy to recall all the ways NS Power could have taken action to be better prepared, and following Fiona, how they could have performed better.

With NS Power and UARB almost ready to start hearings on a complex application of rate increases, and other regulatory matters including an increased yield on shareholder capital be increased from 9.25 to 9.5 percent, Premier Houston tossed either a can of gasoline or maybe a larger bomb into the fire. Although it's more detailed, but Houston is demanding rate increases be limited to 1.8%.

If we watch from the sideline we eventually learn who is David and who is Goliath. Both Premier Tim Houston and Emera CEO, Scot Balfour have been overplaying their respective hands. Houston for jumping the gun by revealing what he wants UARB's decision to be, thus destroying it's level of independence.

Balfour is also overplaying is hand by trying to bully UARB into accepting the profit increases and then indicating EMERA may change its mind on many other investments including the Atlantic Loop a multi-$million project which would have seen transmission of electricity from Quebec to Nova Scotia.

Let's hope Balfour and Houston can bury the hatchet, if there is one; act in a mature professional manner to arrive at decisions in the best interests of province, NS Power/Emera, electrical customers and more importantly , restore UARB to an independent regularity body respected by all.

Now onto a subject far more interesting than watching two highly paid, powerful Nova Scotia executives have a spat in the sandbox.

Couple weeks ago caught a portion of a very interesting interview with Richard Melvin, Melvin Farms Ltd, Canning on CBC Radio. Melvin was talking about approximately 40% of product left in the fields, because it isn't "#1 grade". He was talking about field crops, cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, and other vegetables. He maintained there is nothing wrong with the product other than is might be: off-colour; weird shapes, on not to size to fit nicely into produce section of the your favourite Grocery Store. During the interview he maintained that in one week of harvesting cauliflower, enough product is left in the field to provide a serving for every Nova Scotian. (There's almost One-million of us).

Feed Nova Scotia could feed a lot more people, and perhaps create a revenue stream. To lessen food insecurity is an entirely different project. What is needed is: funding, governance, and province or region wide program to leave less product in the field and put on dinner plates.

I talked to Richard and we have a very interesting discussion. I'll develop a separate article which outlines how Feed Nova Scotia could provide 5,000 lbs of cauliflower to its customers every week of the year.

Maurice

Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.

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To the editor:

A Protest from a Senior

I will mourn the death of the printed Chronicle Herald (mists of time-2022) for some time. Oh, I know it is not dead yet, but suspect its days are numbered. It will not, at first, actually die but be transformed, to continue in the ether in a form not available or readable for many.

The great leaders of Saltwire Network, who like to call their subscribers "members" (I suppose to indicate a warm and fuzzy relationship with the publishers) did not have the courtesy to warn their valued 'members' in advance that their printed newspapers would no longer appear in their mailboxes. Instead, renewal notices continued to be sent out and paid.

Subscribers in my community received a mailed notice on November 20 of a change coming on November 28 (there are no issues printed for November 27 or 28). What exactly that change entailed was not clearly stated. The notice at first seemed to be merely a missive extolling a new digital copy of the Chronicle Herald available to us for $14 a month. But wait....hadn't we been able to access Saltwire online for quite some time? Then there was the ominous word "only" in the first paragraph to raise suspicions. Trying to contact Saltwire for clarification was not easy. Member service representatives said to be 'standing by to assist' at a listed phone number were not standing by. Contact by e-mail with the Chronicle Herald brought a polite reply that lead to the belief, as first thought, the paper was being discontinued. It was later explained that the paper would still be printed but not delivered. The result would be the same to me and others like me.

The Chronicle Herald has been bringing Nova Scotia news to subscribers all over the province for, it seems, time immemorial. The dissemination of factual and honest news is necessary to maintain our existence as a province, as a country. As a society we have come to rely on newspapers and other media to supply us with that service. It is the responsibility of the publishers to get their product to subscribers in a form suitable for them. Subscribers will pay the publishing company.

I am aware that the newspaper industry has been experiencing hard times and they have my sympathy and what support I can give. But newspapers are more than a business that must make a certain profit to survive. They are an essential service. Services are not based on obtaining lucrative profit, but on providing something people need to prosper and to exist as a civilization. Services support community, communities support democracy and democracy has given us a peaceful and secure nation in which to lead our lives.

In my lifetime I have watched our once commonplace services erode. I have watched while the common denominator for life in Nova Scotia became dollars and cents rather than people and community. Certain sectors of our society have been deemed unworthy of attention or support: the poor, the elderly and people who dwell in rural areas. Our province fell for the 'bigger is better' mindset that appeared in the 60s. Our government started amalgamating the administration of services such as education and health care, increasingly eliminating the participation of the ordinary citizen and putting everything under the direction of 'professionals'. The results have not been edifying. People of all walks of life who live in all types of communities, large or small, need to participate in the maintenance of our province/country. It is our responsibility if we wish to continue living the style of life we now enjoy.

Having the Chronicle Herald denied to some people is just another step down the 'slippery slope'. Observing how certain members of our society are treated by big businesses and - I am sorry to say, by our government - moves me to act. I am not rich. I hold no powerful position. I am not young. I feel it my duty to object to the path our society is on. The only method by which I can do this is through writing to various media outlets and government officials. I hope it will annoy some people enough to make them stop and think.

Carol Hyslop
Wentworth Station

First Reading approved – Amended Dog By-Law

By Maurice Rees

It seems the infamous dog by-law, which was the focus of much attention and public demonstrations three years ago, keeps coming back to council for more action. Colchester staff has recommended Council advance the amended Dog By-Law to Second Reading as it will enable the SPCA to carry out the animal control function more effectively on behalf of the Municipality at council's monthly meeting on October 27th..

In the Spring of 2022, staff advised Council of discussions with the SPCA and the need for amendments to the Dog By-law. The changes are intended to address some challenges the SPCA has experienced in enforcing the By-law, especially in circumstances of repeat offences.

Highlights of the amended Dog By-law include: Clarify definitions; Includes a requirement for dogs to be leashed on all municipal property that is signed (ie. parks, trails, playgrounds) regardless of location in the County; Clarifies the conditions and circumstances under which a dog may be deemed fierce and dangerous and provides options to the animal control officer to mitigate possible threats; Outlines processes and procedures to better manage persistent offences and repeat offenders and Improves and expands enforcement options.

In the past, Council has expressed concern over two key areas; namely, an inability to deal with fierce and dangerous dogs in a timely manner, and; limitations to effectively deal with repeat offences. The draft amendments provide better tools that will enable the animal control officer to manage urgent situations in a more efficient manner.

Similarly, and since assuming the animal control function for the Municipality, the SPCA has raised several concerns over enforcement issues with the Dog By-law. Municipal staff have worked closely with the SPCA to identify such shortcomings and the proposed amendments will help ensure enforcement of the By-law better meets Council's service expectations.

Staff has indicated there will be no resource implications if the amended Dog By-Law is adopted. In fact, the added clarity the revised By-Law offers could potentially improve the efficiency and effectiveness of enforcement options.

Council approved first reading sending the matter to next council meeting when more in-depth discussion is permitted.

The Shoreline Journal

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