

# Rees' Pieces

## It's far from over

To get an understanding of the various situations we face each day, it is appropriate to ask: What is appropriate, acceptable in a public setting and needs to be asked?

Answer: The complete truth.

I ask the question because of the deplorable event which occurred in Amherst on New Year's Eve, when Allison Leah Holthoff died after waiting 6-7 hours for emergency treatment at the Cumberland Regional Health Centre.

A bit more of the background. Earlier in the day, Allison was not feeling well. The situation worsened when she collapsed on the floor.

Because of previous problematic ambulance service (never showing up when called), Allison's husband decided to take her to the health centre. He carried her into the ER on his back and placed her in a wheelchair.

It's not clear what actually transpired in the following 6-7 hours, except at times she was laying on the floor in excruciating pain, because it was too painful to sit in the ER chairs.

Finally ER staff took her into a room, but she still had not been seen by a doctor. As her condition worsened, they recessitated her three times, and finally determined she had severe brain damage, due to lack of blood. She was kept on life support until her three children arrived to say their "good-byes".

In support of the family, kin, and community, enter Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin, independent MLA for Cumberland North, who wrote a letter to health minister, Michelle Thompson asking for an investigation.

Not having received a response from health minister Thompson, for almost a week, Smith-McCrossin posted the letter on her Facebook page. Still no response.

However, about midnight on January 6th she received an email (not a phone call) from the Justice Department threatening legal action, because they claimed her Facebook posting contained the person's name, age, and some limited health information.

Instead of only the having health department, management and staff at the Upper Nappan, we have the Justice Department wading into this horrible situation. What is also deplorable is the current government has openly displayed how "insensitive" they are. What is also inexcusable is there is no indication Health Minister, Michelle Thompson has made any effort to personally contact the family.

At the very least, as premier and the front person for nearly 1-million Nova Scotians, Premier Houston should have made personal contact with the family. His lack of action sends a very large message to the rest of us how much compassion he lacks. While the rest of us are compassionate and mourning as Nova Scotians do.

Houston was elected on a promise to "fix healthcare". Meanwhile, he has not shown the expected level of compassion as he has not contacted the family.

Holthoff's passing is bad enough, but to have the Justice Department jump in threatening legal action about sharing identity and personal information on Social Media.

Give me a break. It's not like the details were secret.

Holthoff's name, photos and many personal details were all over the print, radio, and television media. Smith-McCrossin did not reveal anything which was not already public knowledge. What has happened to this family is inexcusable and a public investigation should be held with results shared with the general public. It appears the results will be shared with the family and not the public.

Instead of expending energy trying taking to "cover up" it would be appropriate, if all levels of government would promise transparency and confirm all details will be made public. We all feel sorry for the remainder of the ER staff who for the rest of their lives will wear a portion of the guilt on what transpired in Upper Nappan on New Year's Eve.

If for no other reason both Thompson and Houston should contact the family to show support for their hard working staff.

Smith-McCrossin was justified in the actions she took.

Unfortunately, unless drastic steps are taken, Holthoff will probably not be the last.

The public has a right and should be relentless in their efforts calling for a fully disclosed public inquiry.

I hope management at the Health Centre and others have lawyered up. This matter is far from over.

Maurice

# Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.  
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## Dear Editor:

*(Editor's Note: This is the second time in a short span of time, Mrs. Hyslop has submitted a letter for publication. We'll ask her to refrain a few months, so we have space to give others the opportunity to express their feelings.)*

On my computer I watch a number of opinion programs hosted by individuals. They sometimes begin by saying "Today we're going to talk about...". Well, today I'm going to write about discrimination.

Discrimination: the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of ethnicity, age, sex, or disability. (Google)

There are, of course, other reasons for the discriminatory treatment of certain groups of people. I would like to bring to your attention the discrimination practiced by our governments and big businesses towards people who live in rural areas. For the most part this goes unnoticed as it has grown slowly over the years and is viewed as 'just the way things are' by most of us.

It was a statement made by Premier Houston in reference to the Federal carbon tax on gas reported in an article in the Chronicle Herald of November 23, 2022: "They (rural dwellers) don't have the options to ride a bike to work, take the bus or, as a federal minister suggested, take the subway" (I like that little dig, kudos Premier!). That got me thinking. It was like a report put out by the Department of Education a few years ago regarding the general physical fitness of school age children in which it was suggested students be encouraged to walk or bike to school. This report, which no doubt cost a number of dollars, was presented to the public by a governmental department that was involved in the ongoing process of closing local schools and bussing children many miles to larger centres.

I live in a rural community and in my 70+ years here, I have observed many changes.

When my family moved here in the mid 1950s the services essential to a healthy community were still in place: general stores, garages, schools (to which children could walk), churches, a locally owned and operated telephone system, a local road maintenance crew and all the related organizations needed to support them. There also was rail service for both passengers and freight. What is known as a single community today was at that time was a collection of several smaller communities, each of which was independently administered to by its own residents. Words that come to mind are "independent", "sustainable" and "local involvement".... in short "alive".

After spending a century or so in building a country by providing connections such as national road and rail transportation, mail service, telephone and access to electricity the powers that be turned to paring things down. The buzzword changed from "service" to "efficiency" and the emphasis went from "people" to "profit". Changes came in stages. The first to go in this community was public transport by rail, then freight service, resulting in the demise of a once-thriving train station which handled mail, supplies for local stores and lumber export as well as passengers. There was a bit of a lull with the construction of the Trans Canada highway through the community which brought with it bus service (no longer available) and new gas stations. The government then closed the one room schools in the various small communities by constructing a 'consolidated' elementary school in a central spot and bussing high school students to nearby towns. Eventually big gas companies started to remove their tanks from the general stores because, they said, there was not enough custom for them to maintain them. Telephone service was taken over by a provincial business resulting in declining maintenance and longer wait times for repairs.

Road maintenance crews were eventually removed from the community and service declined. And on and on.

The several small communities are now known as one community, we have one general store with gas tanks that has struggled to survive over the years, we have no school, we have no public transport, Canada Post is no longer supplying mail delivery to some residents, the delivery of our provincial newspaper has been stopped, telephone line maintenance and electrical line maintenance are uncertain and road maintenance is almost unheard of for our gravel roads.

Basically, our government has taken the care of the communities out of the hands of the people who live there and given it to people who have no knowledge or interest in such places, something made painfully obvious by the suggestion from a federal minister that rural people should "take the subway". Big businesses have gobbled up small businesses and base their custom on dollars alone, leaving small communities out of the equation and they will continue to do so as long as we allow them.

So the discrimination I want you to notice is that small rural communities are thought of as undeserving of public services by our governments. Why? because (I suppose) we are small in population density and our votes will not make any great change in elections. We just don't count. We are also thought of as undeserving of business services. Why? because (I know) there are not enough of us in one spot to supply the profit to which they believe they are entitled.

In less than a century our local rural communities went from several self-serviced, sustainable and vibrant collections of people to a series of houses along a highway containing people who wait on other people from away to do their governing and supply services, whose local concerns are not included in any decision making and who need to drive ap-

## OP-ED

**Give a smile, nod or wave**  
**Submitted by Dennis Daley**

Today, January 9, 2023, is National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day. As Nova Scotia's provincial police force, RCMP employees live and work in communities from one end of the province to the other.

Most of our 1,400 personnel are on the frontline supporting Nova Scotians out of our 53 detachments between Cape North

and Cape Sable Island. Other staff work in federal units that handle matters of national and international scope.

Every day, Nova Scotia RCMP employees are working to prevent and investigate crime, protect national security, offer vital operational assistance to partner agencies, and provide support to those we serve.

We receive over 165,000 calls for service annually. These calls range from domestic disputes to motor vehicle collisions to fraud investigations to acts of hate crime. We're called to inci-

dents of gun violence, sexual violence, human trafficking, child exploitation, and sudden death.

Many of the scenes we attend are high-risk; others are heartbreaking.

So, today I ask you to consider offering a smile, nod or wave to your local police officer.

I can say from experience that the support I received as a new constable starting out in New Minas meant a lot - especially after a difficult shift.

**Dennis Daley is Assistant Commissioner Commanding Officer, Nova Scotia RCMP**

**The Shoreline Journal** (circ. 1650) is a monthly community newspaper serving communities along the Gloscap 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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