

# REES' Pieces

## Perception or reality? NOT GOOD.

Many believe perception is more believable than reality. It's difficult to shake negative perceptions. This will be a difficult column for me to write, because I am a Stephen McNeil fan, and readily admit it. However, I am very disappointed over the last couple of months. On the other side is my professional responsibility to the Shoreline's loyal readers and I'm on their side.

A lot of political capital has been spent in 2015, which for the most part was avoidable. However, we don't need erosion of Premier McNeil's credibility, although it has started to happen, not by his hand, but blame must be set at the feet of others.

His blame could be confined to not going out of character and slamming his fist on the cabinet and caucus tables telling all those present to shape up and follow the course of action he and the team got elected on.

As hard as Stephen tries others seem to be eroding his credibility. Last winter is was the arbitrator negotiating unions in the health authority; then Leo Glavine made some statements, which caused a lot of confusion, back tracking and eating crow. The finance department handling of the Movie Tax Credits created a lot of disturbance and is still causing tremors; to highlight the fall, it was Andrew Younger and his tirades and backbiting actions.

Then McNeil's Chief of Staff acted in an unprofessional manner and was forced to resign. Just get over the chief of staff and the wheels start to come off labour negotiations, when it initially appeared settlements were in place. A few months ago he seemed to be on the road to settling and getting most of the labour contracts renewed, through diligence and hard work and without a strike.

Since being elected, he has constantly maintained his position he would not sign any contract which the province could not afford. In fact he seemed so adamant, if the labour situation could not be resolved, I could see him pulling the plug and going to the polls to let the public decide if he was right or someone else should run the province and sign contracts he deemed unaffordable.

Many people with whom I have spoken about where the sympathy would lie feel if government was holding the line, there would be very little general public sympathy for teachers, nurses, or any of the public servants. In the event any of the unions chose to strike or engage in an elongated period of work-to-rule public support would automatically rest with government.

Early in December with leaders of the nurses and NSGEU recommending membership accept the contract proposal negotiated by their team with McNeil's Liberals. It appeared labour peace for most of the contracts would occur before Christmas. As per usual, details of the contracts were not made public until members had a chance to study and vote.

McNeil's chance of immediate success started to go off the rails. A number of previous past presidents on the labour side issued statements of disapproval, which to some degree was anticipated. Everything started to rush downhill when members of government gave interviews relating to what might happen after the contracts were signed. This raised the hackles of union leaders and membership causing one to turn down the proposal, and the NSGEU delaying its vote until the nurses voted first.

Bill 148 when it is proclaimed will limit what any arbitrator can award.

Where the problem of perception comes in was approval of MLA's qualifying for a pension after only two years of service when they reach the age of 55. McNeil was caught in the middle on that one. He has been preaching austerity and cutting away any fat. Current legislation states the recommendations of the three person committee's report on MLA's compensation had to be accepted and implemented.

The timing was not right to enhance MLA's pensions, especially when taxpayers contribute \$6 to the fund for every \$1 from individual MLA's.

Regardless of perception or reality, it's not a good thing. Labour peace will be harder to achieve. One member of the MLA Remuneration Committee is a president of a union currently in negotiations.

**Maurice**

# Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.

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December 2, 2015

Letter to myself:

Here I sit on a Wednesday afternoon wondering what I can do to occupy myself until supertime. Normally, that's not a problem as I'm going straight out with more work than I can get done in one afternoon.

However, not this week. About 3:30 pm on Saturday, November 28th, while working at our t-shirt store, I took some sort of spell and ended up calling 911. Within minutes, the ambulance with two paramedics arrived and soon had me on the way to emergency at Colchester East Hants Regional Hospital.

Overnight in emerg, then Sunday afternoon admitted to a room on D-3. Today's excitement for me on D-3 just concluded - a trip down to x-ray, in preparation for Thursday's trip to New Glasgow for a pacemaker - a twenty minute procedure. Doctors have informed me, the ambulance will leave around 1:00 pm and I should be back around 4:00 pm.

Then home on Friday morning if all goes as planned.

The purpose of this writing was not to let you know about my ordeal which includes excellent treatment by doctors, nurses and support staff. However, I discov-

ered something totally amazing in today's world of fast paced technological advances and a new \$Multi-million health care facility.

Not being overly sick and basically feeling as spry as I did last week, I asked Dorothy to bring in my laptop, as I wanted to do some work and monitor emails for both the store and the Shoreline Journal. My assumption was with the laptop I could keep in touch with the world, plus send and receive emails. However, was I mistaken.

Wi-Fi is not available in this modern facility. Wi-Fi is simple and easy to operate. Users know how to access what they want or need. One can use Wi-Fi at McDonalds, Tim Hortons or Deluxe Fish and Chips but not in Colchester's new hospital.

Those within the facility are not totally left in the age of dinosaurs. Each room has a unit, which can be rented for about \$20.00 per day, to provide menu selection, radio, television, internet, online access via newspapers and other amenities. It would require a couple of hours instruction to operate to capacity. The unit or software was not purchased locally. It bares a Norway stamp, so was not purchased locally.

But, still no Wi-Fi.

I spoke to a friend, who

said his late father was left, in his dying days, without television or radio, because he could not figure out how to operate the unit. The touch screen is very, very slow and would require at least a couple hours of mentoring to use to capacity.

Speaking to some staff from various departments I got the same reaction. "It's absurd. They spent so much money in the wrong places". Granted, many patients should not be working. For some, hospital care is needed, but they could still do a few things online or use Facebook to have an ongoing social presence. A business professional would be less stressed if possible to have Wi-Fi. Think of the one person shop, or a small business owner, who is responsible to customers and the lively-hood of employees.

Think about the family members, who are sitting with a terminally ill relative and would like to use their smart phone or tablet to play games, or text important messages to waiting relatives. Are they being served well for the \$-Millions of taxpayers money invested in the facility? Do they have to leave the facility to send messages, then pay an additional parking fee?

What potential benefits to local equipment suppliers evaporated when a system

other than Wi-Fi was purchased? It's hard to believe in a modern complex something as simple as Wi-Fi is not included. After all I can access Wi-Fi while waiting for my Big Mac. The Town of Digby offers Wi-Fi to anyone visiting downtown.

Maybe there's a way for local entrepreneurs to make the service available on a user fee basis. With the number of people who would use the service, if offered. Maybe a fee of \$2 to \$5 per day would be profitable and everyone would be happier.

In closing, thanks to the fantastic staff for professional delivery of their services and all their smiles. You made my stay a happy experience.

**Maurice**

## Eric Jennings Receives Distinguished Alumni Award

Continued from page 1

In 1969, Eric founded the Masstown Market, now one of Nova Scotia's most well-known shopping destinations, as a means to sell fresh produce in his home community. The Market has grown to be a venture more successful than Eric Jennings could ever have imagined.

Both the Masstown Market and Eric himself have been recognized by several organizations for their success over the years, including TripAdvisor, the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce and the Central Nova Tourist Association. In fact, the Market has won 12 awards from the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers and this past year was inducted into its Hall of Fame.

Although Eric is technically retired, he can still be found at the Market most days working alongside his two sons, Laurie and Wade, who respectively oversee the management and operational sides of the business. The Masstown Market is truly a family business - Laurie's wife, Lisa, is also heavily involved, and several of Eric's

grandchildren as well as extended family members work or have worked there.

A good many things at the Masstown Market have changed since 1969. However, the things that haven't changed are perhaps more important. When Eric founded his business, he sought to provide three things: good quality produce, friendly service, and reasonable prices. These three things have remained ever-present within the business and have proven to be the keys to his success; these, and supporting the people who supported him. Eric has always made an effort to support his local community in

any way he could, whether it be through purchasing product from local farmers or hiring local contractors for one of the Market's many expansions.

Eric's overwhelming dedication to his family business, his community and local agriculture as well as his undeniable success made him a very deserving recipient of the Faculty of Agriculture's Distinguished Alumnus Award for 2015.

**Thank you to Colette Wyllie, Alumni Relations, Office of Advancement, Agricultural Campus Dalhousie University for information on the award and citation.**

## Preservation Society Seek Input

Continued from page 1  
future plans and activities for the church and some ideas were contributed. Community input is always welcomed and community members are encouraged to participate in the success of St. James Church and take place in any activities and events that are of a public nature. Should anyone be interested in using the

Church for an event in 2016 please contact Dawn Sprecher at 902-655-2020 or dawn\_sprecher@yahoo.ca.

**For more details on upcoming workshops please visit the following: In the Village Café facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/InTheVillageCafe/?fref=ts> or the webpage at <http://lauriegunn.wix.com/inthevillagecafe>**

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