

REES' Pieces

Pressure on Judicial System

Sometimes there are so many topics it is hard to pick the one most appropriate for this column. This month I have chosen the continued unrest and impatience of citizens and hope to be able to intertwine “unrest” into an understandable rambling.

The spectre of uprisings rocking Egypt and other undemocratic Mideast countries have been spurred in part by high unemployment, rising prices and the failure of those governments to provide economic opportunities and hope for their people. The rapid pace of events in Egypt were, in part, spurred on by the availability of the social media – facebook, twitter, internet, which the government was unable to curtail.

The amazing and most thankful thing was the peacefulness observed by citizens, the army and those in power. Yes, there was imprisonment, some bloodshed, looting and rowdiness, but it was mild in comparison to what it could have been.

Now that they have succeeded in toppling the government, it is questionable if citizens will be patient enough to let plans be made to implement democracy. Also in question is will those in power be willing to let go?

Egypt is just the beginning. We are in for similar uprisings in other undemocratic countries, although not many of them will be as peaceful. Unrest has even spread to Wisconsin, where thousands are demonstrating about wage freezes, cuts to benefits and elimination of government funded programs.

In Washington congress seems headed for a deadlock and threatening to shutdown government on March 4th, when approved funding expires. Here in Canada, the electorate is upset at a variety of events: Bev Otta being faced with possible sanctioning in Parliament over how she explained to a parliamentary committee inserting “not” into a funding document.

Nova Scotia taxpayers are biting at the bit with 52 charges, mostly fraud related activities, being laid against three past and one current MLA. Premier Dexter, who was previously named in the expense scandal, but not charged, is adamant the government will attempt to seek monetary restitution if any of the four are found guilty.

We’ve lived with the revelations of MLA expense for a year, and spent six months wondering if the RCMP would find enough evidence to lay charges. Now is the beginning of the next phase, the pressure point has now switched to the judicial system.

Many citizens, although hoping otherwise, were fearful things would have been swept under the carpet and the RCMP would come forward with nothing. Now they are taking the same cynical approach to the judiciary wondering if they will be side with those who appointed them or if they will implement the full force of the law and hand out sentences which will meet taxpayer’s expectations.

Taxpayer unrest has trickled down to the municipal level. Even the most minor situation becomes irritating and mountains are built out of molehills.

Locally, consideration of acquiring a “Chain of Office” for the Municipality of the County of Colchester has become the latest over-coffee conversation. Sure \$5,000 is \$5,000, but it’s not as far flung as \$47-million Halifax and the province have each committed and are pressuring Ottawa to participate to build a new convention centre.

The question is should municipalities have a “Chain of Office”? To the west, the Municipality of East Hants, which is about half the size of Colchester, has had one for as many years as I have been a resident there – now 16 years.

In Colchester’s case, it’s not Mayor Bob Taylor wanting one. The matter, as far as I can determine, evolved from councilors.

Globally, unrest is in its infancy and will continue for many years. Federally and provincially, it will continue until elected representatives have the fortitude to make tough decisions to actually right governing and economic mistakes of the past.

Those in public sector should not be rewarded with pensions and healthcare benefits which are significantly better than those in the private sector. A committed team involving government, business, public sector, and private citizens must be in charge of making decisions which deliver long term benefits to all of Nova Scotia.

It’s not a matter of reducing costs, but rather implementing systems to deliver results.

Maurice

Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.
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Hi Maurice

I will definitely submit an article about the Girl Guides each month.

Thanks for adding me to your correspondents list. I’ll do what I can to help with what’s needed.

I love the Shoreline and want to support it every way I can.

Rebecca Taylor, Londonderry

Dear Maurice:

Enclosed is my cheque to renew my subscription to the Shoreline Journal for another year. I thoroughly have enjoyed it all over the years.

**Yours truly, Dorcas L. Knight
Sanbornville, NH, USA**

To the Editor,

As a farmer I am concerned about our collective awareness regarding food, fibre, medicine, etc. Where does it all come from?

What are you eating? May I ask for a moment of your time? Please open your cupboard and your fridge. Look at all of the labels on the food packages. Write down the places where the food is coming from. Now, do a bit of math. Calculate how much is made or produced in Nova Scotia, how much in Canada, and how much from out of country.

Do you believe that the food you purchase at the grocery store will always be there and always be affordable or available? Right now in Nova Scotia all of our good agricultural land is not being used. But it has been used in the past. If we build houses or roads or commercial buildings, or water treatment plants, or whatever on it, then is isn’t available to grow food, fibre, energy, medicine, etc.

If you believe that we will

always get food from someplace else, then whether we have enough land or not isn’t something that concerns you. If you haven’t thought about it, I would encourage you to notice what is happening around the world in our largest agricultural regions. Floods and droughts are what is happening.

So please, do a personal check-in. How much of what you eat is dependent on importing? What would you eat if the importing stopped?

**Patricia Bishop, Taproot Farms
Port Williams, Nova Scotia**

To the Editor,

As a former teacher, administrator and Minister of Education, I have had the privilege of viewing the education system in our province inside-out. That’s why the current tenor of debate around budget cuts to the system is so disappointing. The rhetoric surrounding the issue has detracted from the number one issue for educators, parents and students - and that is outcomes. What are we trying to achieve? What skills do we want our children to have upon graduation? What do we want our public education system to look like?

Instead, the debate has focused on what percentage of cut will be dealt to school boards and has deteriorated to finger pointing. Our starting point needs to be ‘what we are trying to achieve in education?’. Then, questions

about how we are delivering the programs can be asked. For instance, we all support the concept of inclusion in our classrooms. What we can question is whether the current model is delivering results. We all support professional development for our educators. But we can question when it takes place and whether it is being delivered in a way which puts students in the classroom first.

The new Minister of Education is meeting with representatives of the school boards this week. She will be giving them budget figures for the upcoming fiscal year - this, after months of a divisive and discouraging budget cutting “exercise”. The Minister insists on putting the focus on budget cuts, instead of outcomes.

What would be more valuable is for the government to scrap this flawed process and start over at the beginning. With a meeting of all interested parties - including parents, educators and unions - to reach a consensus on the education outcomes we are trying to meet. Each and every-one of us is affected by the public education system in our province. The students in our school system right now are our future taxpayers, be they entrepreneurs, community leaders or care givers. They deserve better from us than the current level of debate.

**Karen Casey, MLA
Colchester North**

Island for Sale

By Maurice Rees

If you have \$5-million you could be the proud new owner of Long Island, one of the cluster of 5 at Five Islands. California retired lawyer, Dick Lemon, purchased the island in 2003 for a reported \$75,000. Since then Lemon has been a significant employer in the area, building a three bedroom house and four cottages on the island, re-developed the Five Islands property now known Mo’s Café which also includes a hostel and was instrumental in locating Masstown Market - Five Islands into a vacant property.

He is the founding organizer of “Not Since Moses Run” - a 5 and 10Km run on the ocean floor when the tide is out. The event attracts thousands of runners from around the world.

Long Island has become retreat for artists and university staff, but that privilege will be lost when the island sells. Once the island sells, Lemon’s next venture will be to build a retreat in the Five Islands area, which would have sleeping accommodations and a common cooking area for 15-20 people .

UCW Holds Annual Meeting

By Chris Urquhart

Truro Presbyterial UCW held their Annual meeting - finally - on Tuesday February 15th, the storm date for this meeting. Although it was again not the best of weather we did go ahead with the meeting and 54 ladies were able to attend.

The opening worship by Brunswick St. UCW centered on our theme: “Love Like You Mean It!” The program on the Holy Land that Don and Lynne Reid gave was very interesting and seeing their slides made us wish we had been with them. Information on Camp

McLennan was shared with us by Chuck Patterson opened our eyes to some problems we hadn’t realized existed.

The Memorial Service for our departed UCW members that the ladies from First United UCW did was very moving. The business meeting also gave us items to think about, including our Cookie Cottage at Berwick Camp; and the closing worship left us uplifted as we went back out into the snow and wind to wend our way home.

All in all, a great day for all of us who were able to attend.

The Shoreline Journal

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