

REES' Pieces

January and February were disastrous

It doesn't do any good to complain about it, but ask any retailer or small business owner and they will quickly tell you January and February were disasters. Not to dwell upon the negative, but might as well face reality and get it out of the way.

I'm not an economist or polling expert, but I do have a few suspicions as to why it happened. Other than one week in February, when we lost the whole week due to two severe storms and one day of a teacher's strike, we can't blame the weather.

We have been lucky with only three storms this winter. Granted the snow was piled high after the storms from the 15th to the 22nd, but with moderating temperatures, bright sun and fog overnight, it's amazing how quickly snowbanks have shrunk. Some fields are showing lots of stubble from the corn stocks.

Business does not like uncertainty and there was lots of it in the first six weeks after the holidays. First there was concern about what affect Trump's presidency would have on our economy. At that time softwood lumber on the West Coast was a topic of great discussion. Of course, anything softwood causes shutters on the east coast. Disruption in the education system, work to rule and teachers rejecting the third contract proposal did not help.

Of course let's not forget scholastic sports being cancelled; graduating students not being able to get letters of recommendation and student teachers not being able to practice. Now we have most of those negativities behind us. Prime Minister Trudeau paid a visit to Washington and the trip ended more positively than we expected. Maybe we have been smart lumping together most of this year's negativity into the first two months. Now we can push forward for the next 10 months feeling much better.

Here's a few positives: Winter is behind us, although we can still get a nasty storm in March; Easter is not far away causing us to believe spring is around the corner; furnace fuel has been down in price, so our pockets are not as empty as they were a couple of years ago.

As we really start to gaze toward summer, our dollar is trading at a level which will help the upcoming tourist season. This is an off-election year for our friends south of the border; political confusion/ unrest continues throughout the USA; level of our dollar, and our almost clean record on terrorism, we could see a major influx of American tourists this year. It should be a banner year for tourism.

Provincially we will probably be making a trek to the polls this spring, but that will probably be over by the middle of May.

Here's my highlight of positivity for the month and I'll move toward it slowly.

How many times have you felt or heard your friends complain about all levels of government doing things you did not approve and you felt like they were not listening? Many, many times, I bet.

In fact that probably played a large part in Trump's election victory. He struck a raw nerve of the voter and the more he listened to them, the larger the crowds he attracted. And he didn't let go. Although he's doing a lot of things in ways, I do not agree, I will give him credit. He has gone full steam ahead delivering on exactly what he said he would do, unusual for many politicians.

All of us could cite examples in Nova Scotia when municipal governments have overlooked the wishes of their constituents. If Colchester Council has done that in the past, they have done an about face.

On February 15th they tabled a motion to build a sidewalk until a public meeting was held with affected residents. A week to the day, the meeting had been held. The next day on February 23rd, council overturned a staff recommendation and did exactly what 14 of 15 residents wanted - a 270 metre sidewalk on the East side of Carter Road in Brookfield.

Congratulations to Colchester Municipal Council for listening to the taxpayers. Keep up the good work.

Maurice

Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.

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Dear Editor:

In his piece in the Chronicle Herald, February 11, "Managing forests not that easy", Gary Saunders suggests that "critics" to clear cutting like Mike Parker and me should be ignored since, I gather, we are not trained in forestry practices.

Just for clarification, though I have not been trained in forest harvesting methods, I do follow the research being carried out and I am finding more qualified, peer reviewed, scientific evidence to support my opposition to clear cutting. I might add that even studies within the Department of Natural Resources ("A Simple Geospatial Nutrient Budget Model for Assessing Forest Harvest Sustainability across Nova Scotia, Canada")

Kevin Keys, ET. Al published in 2016, indicates serious consequences of the practices promoted by DNR. I would suggest that those with "training" have not done such a fantastic job as evidenced by the deplorable state of much of what once was Nova Scotia's old forest stands. Also, to clarify, I recognize that there are times when clear cutting may be justified but they are rare.

I would also like to recommend that people check a federal website, <http://nsforestnotes.ca> which illustrates that the intensity of forest harvesting in Nova Scotia shows that the most extensive harvesting ANYWHERE in Canada occurred in Central N.S. between 1985 and 2011.

I grew up on a mixed farm and worked with my father to manage a one hundred plus wood lot by carefully choosing, first, which trees needed to be cut (diseased insect

infested, etc.) and then which ones could be cut to provide space for other trees to grow better. This type of harvesting put food on the table for his family for years and not once did he clear-cut. Nor did our forests suffer the plight of wide-range insect infestation or disease. Plus, the trees were larger and made good lumber. The smaller top part of the trees was sold for pulp as a byproduct.

Gary writes, "Unfortunately, this multi-species, multi-age method works only with species whose offspring can thrive in their parents' shade till an opening occurs - trees like yellow birch, red spruce, beech, hemlock and sugar maple."

He goes on to say, "But sun-loving types like white and black spruce, pine, aspen and larch - far more common here than shade-tolerant - can't grow in the shade." He doesn't indicate that these are more common because they are areas that have previously been extensively harvested.

There are two points about these statements that he neglects to mention. 1) The first list are trees that constitute the bulk of the old so-called "Acadian" forests which have taken hundreds of years to develop because they require a more nutrient-supplied soil. These are of higher quality for use in a multitude of ways. These forests have been decimated and now compromise only about 1% of Nova Scotia's forests. 2) The second list is comprised of trees of lesser quality and more limited use. They can be harvested every thirty to fifty years so are of more value to the pulp and paper, biomass, wood pellet, chips for export, industries. These trees grow in

poorer quality soils usually on previously clear-cut lands.

Once a clear-cut has been harvested a second time and the brush, stumps, etc. removed, the quality of the types of trees which then take their place are even of poorer quality. The reasons for this are numerous but a couple is that the nutrients required for a better quality of forest have been removed due to exposure of the soil to the air and rain. As well, the churning of the thin layer of soil which covers a great deal of the land in NS leaves a calcium depleted soil. What we get when the soil is eroded is exposure of the underlying bedrock below. If left alone, this land might once again become a forest like we once had but it will take a couple of hundred years or more. This is because Nature will have to go through the whole process which it has gone through since the last ice age.

I am not even touching on the issue of the increasing in carbon dioxide emitted due to the increasing of clear cutting as soil exposed to the air releases its stored up CO2 and the loss of the old trees decreases the ability of the forests as a whole to extract CO2 from the air as they do this far better than young ones. That is for another article.

To see for ourselves what is really happening in our forests we should take a walk in a place like Victoria Park in Truro where we see trees which are a foot and a half in diameter and then walk through the areas lining any of our highways which were clear-cut once or twice twenty to thirty years ago.

Quite a contrast!

Jim Harpell, Shortt's Lake

Sewer Extension Deemed Unaffordable

By Maurice Rees

Municipal staff continues searching for ways to economically install an extension to the sewer lines in Great Village. The matter had been presented to council committee on December 15th, but with a cost of \$2.4-Million staff was asked to review the matter and come back with a more economical solution.

In July 2016 the Great Village Community Association made a formal request to extend the existing sanitary sewer system along Station Road. At a meeting on December 15, a staff report suggested it would cost \$2.4-Million for two sewer line

extension, which were deemed to be unaffordable, but council asked for a review of the matter for a smaller project.

In the Action Item presented to council committee on February 15th, council's request for to revise the proposal to a smaller project, to include 1 Km of line along Highway 2 across the bridge to Civic #8951. Staff reported their investigation revealed without the installation of a pumping station the existing line could not be extended the full 1 Km distance. Their data revealed the line could be extended along Hwy #2 as far as Station Road. Any servic-

ing beyond Station Road would require a pumping station. Estimated cost is \$1.12-Million.

If the project proceeded, it would service 26 homes, with a taxable assessment of \$3.3-Million, which based on the current area sewer rate of 12 cents per \$100 assessment would only generate \$3,960, of which \$1,320 would be directed toward the capital cost of \$1.12-Million. Mathematically, that would cost \$43,076 per household. In current budgeting for 2017-2018, there is a line allocating only \$25,000 for design costs, with no budgeting for any capital cost.

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