

REES' Pieces

Will they bite the bullet?

(This column is much longer than most, requiring careful intense reading and action by taxpayers).

Will politicians have the fortitude to find ways in the "new economy" to pay for all the CoVid funding once the beast has been wrestled to into submission?

Next question: Will we accept what they decide as a repayment plan without reducing services or raising taxes?

If there is one thing we have learned, or should learn to accept - we "must" change nearly everything we do to co-exist with CoVid-19. If taxpayers must change all their habits, government must lead the way to grow the economy, but not bankrupt individual taxpayers or businesses.

During the height of the pandemic, thousands of jobs were lost and may disappear forever, yet those in the public service faced little financial impact. For the most part public sector employees, except season workers, received their paychecks.

Will all MLA's, government and opposition, form a bond in the four provincial governments to repay the CoVid debt without crippling the economy by raising taxes and instituting major cuts in services?

I think not, but they should.

In Atlantic Canada, as a whole, the provincial governments could reduce annual payroll by \$1.89 billion based on 2012-13 fiscal year calculations. For the same 2012-13 the regional provincial-level budget deficit was \$1.08 billion.

In 2016 and 2018 this column, plus several other individual stories I offered factual information on how to "right-size" the region's economy. I referred to an Atlantic Institute for Market Studies (AIMS) "The Size and cost of Atlantic Canada's Public Sector" study from September 2014. The entire report is available at www.aims.ca or by emailing aims@aims.ca

Here's a few facts pulled from the 12 page report:

- Public sector employment in Atlantic Canada is higher than the national average. Nationally, in 2013, 17.8 per cent of all jobs were in the civilian public sector. By comparison, in the Atlantic provinces, this figure is 22.6 per cent, nearly five percentage points above the national average.
- Public sector employment rates in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick also exceed the national average of 18 per cent, accounting for 21.8 and 20.4 per cent of all jobs.
- Some people object measuring the size of the public sector relative to the employed workforce is not the best way to measure government employment because all residents—not just those employed in the workforce—make use of government services.
- There are 84 sub-national public sector employees per 1,000 residents in Canada. Closely aligned with this level of employment is New Brunswick, at 85 employees per 1,000 residents. In each of the other Atlantic provinces, however, sub-national employment is at least 10 per cent higher than in the country as a whole.
- In Prince Edward Island, there are 95 sub-national public employees per 1,000 residents; Nova Scotia, 99 per 1,000 residents. Newfoundland and Labrador has 109 public employees per 1,000 residents—nearly 30 per cent higher than the national average.
- In total, relative to population, Atlantic Canada's rate of public sector employment is 14.3 per cent larger than the country as a whole.
- If public sector employment rates matched the national average in Newfoundland and Labrador, there would be 13,253 fewer public sector workers reducing the wage bill by \$880 million in the 2012-13 fiscal year.
- In Nova Scotia, there would have been 14,127 fewer public sector workers, reducing the wage bill by \$836 million.
- The corresponding figures for Prince Edward Island are 1,686 public sector workers and \$112 million, and for New Brunswick, 834 public sector workers and \$58 million.
- To put these figures into perspective, the regional provincial-level budget deficit was \$1.08 billion in fiscal year 2012/13. Aligning public sector employment rates with the national average would reduce the total sub-national government wage bill by \$1.89 billion in the 2012-13 fiscal year.
- If Atlantic region provincial governments could cut the gap in half, or even reduce it by a quarter over a ten-year period through attrition, wage restraint, and other frugal management options, they would save hundreds of millions of dollars, with significant positive implications for their fiscal outlook.
- The Atlantic region faces the stark reality of large debt loads and the risk that debt-servicing costs will rise should interest rates increase.
- We have shown one source of pressure on provincial budgets in Atlantic Canada is the public sector wage bill.
- Due to high rates of public sector employment in the region, and a compensation gap between private and public sector employees that is wider than the Canadian average, the four Atlantic provinces face the largest public sector wage bills relative to labour income in the country.
- Since public sector wages and benefits are the single largest expenditure for these governments, restraining the growth of the public sector wage bill is a necessary condition for maintaining fiscal stability in the years ahead.

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Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.

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Open Letter to Public
October 20, 2020

On behalf of the Brookfield Athletic Association (BAA), welcome to the 84th Annual Brookfield Elks Sports Draw. Your support makes it possible for the BAA to continue to provide support for boys and girls, men and women in a wide variety of sports and activities.

We are also able to partner again this year with the Truro Atlantic Superstore and Truro Canadian Tire in sales efforts, which enables us to contribute to children's charities they support, President's Choice Children's Charity and JumpStart.

This year, \$1 per ticket sold will be divided equally and donated to three Charities: Feed Nova Scotia; Hub House for the Homeless; and Canadian Red Cross for Covid-19 and NS Victims of Violence.

The 1st Grand Prize this year is cash, \$20,000 Guaranteed, estimated to grow to \$50,000. \$7 per ticket sold will make up 1st Prize. Tickets are \$20. Draw date is Tuesday, November 10th.

Check our list of Ticket Sellers: http://www.brookfieldelks.ca/uploads/3/8/4/0/38400929/2020_ticket_sellers.pdf

For more information: <http://www.brookfieldelks.ca/>

Thanks so much!

Hugh Matheson, Robert Putnam, Co-Chairs Sports Draw, Mike Henderson, BAA Chairman

Dear Editor:

The Along the Shore Community Health Board has a new Facebook page, and we're hoping that our local community groups can help spread the word! If you are using social media, please like and share our Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/atschb>

We would greatly appreciate this, as it will help increase our reach within the communities along the shore! If there is anything you would

like us to share on our page, we are happy to help promote and share events/activities!

Thanks,

Mandy Moore

Community Health Board Coordinator

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LAST POST FUND FONDS DU SOUVENIR

Remembrance Day – Last Post Fund

Dear Sir or Madam,

As we approach Remembrance Day, I am hoping that perhaps your readership can assist me with a solemn, but important, task related to veterans. I am the Coordinator of the Last Post Fund's Unmarked Grave Program here in NS.

We are a non-profit organization with a mission "to ensure that no Veteran is denied a dignified funeral and burial, as well as a military gravestone, due to insufficient funds at time of death." In many circumstances, when veterans passed away either they, or their family, did not have the financial means to pay for a suitable marker. Since I am a solitary figure in trying to locate unmarked veteran graves, I rely on members of the community to provide me with leads to follow up. Our criteria to provide a marker is relatively straightforward: The UMG Program is

available to eligible Veterans whose grave has not had a permanent headstone or foot marker for five years or more, and who have not previously received funeral and burial funding from the Last Post Fund or Veterans Affairs Canada. I will also point out that a veteran to us is someone who served, regardless of the era and how long they served! If a grave of a veteran has been marked with a temporary marker (IE: wooden cross), we will also consider replacing it with something more permanent. If any of your readers are aware of an unmarked veteran's grave, regardless of location, I would love to hear from them. I can be reached at steve_stamant@hotmail.com

Sincerely,

Steve St-Amant

VP - Nova Scotia Chapter - Last Post Fund

Premier Announces Changes to Cabinet

On October 13th, Premier Stephen McNeil announced changes to the Executive Council. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, MLA for Lunenburg, joins cabinet as Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage and Minister of Gaelic Affairs.

Former Communities, Culture and Heritage Minister Leo Glavine becomes Minister of the Department of Health and Wellness. Mr. Glavine, the MLA for Kings West, previously served as minister of the department from 2013-2017. He will continue to serve as Minister of Seniors.

Minister of Immigration, Acadian

Affairs and Francophonie, Lena Metlege Diab, MLA for Halifax Armadale, will also take over as Minister of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education.

Derek Mombourquette, MLA for Sydney Whitney Pier and Minister of Energy and Mines, also becomes Minister of the Department of Lands and Forestry.

The appointments come after the recent resignations of the previous ministers of Health and Wellness, Labour and Advanced Education and Forestry, who all resigned to enter the leadership race.



Stephen McNeil

The Shoreline Journal (circ. 1650) is a monthly community newspaper serving communities along the Glooscap 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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(Esplanade)
Rath Eastlink Comm Centre
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Each classroom at the following schools will receive a copy of the Shoreline Journal:

Bass River Consolidated;
Great Village Elementary; Debert
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Central Colchester Junior High
School; Parrsboro Elementary and
Parrsboro Regional High School.

We are interested in placing the Shoreline Journal in additional locations. If you have a suggestion, or wish to have the Shoreline available from your store, please contact:

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