

REES' Pieces

Living beyond our means

I always try to be positive, and rarely do I get on my "high horse", but recently several things have occurred, which causes me to conclude, we have our priorities in the wrong place.

If we are in our sixties, we need only to think back to the stories related to us by our parents about life during the dirty 30's. If we are under 50, we need to reflect on the life of our grandparents during the World War I or life in the 20's and then the destructive 30's.

After accessing what they told us, we need to understand why they were so frugal, resourceful and in some cases hide money in the mattress. Yet even though family fortunes were lost in the "Great Depression", they were able to rebound, amassing sizable family estates. Their hard work, dedication to family, and acquiring their own property accounted for the successes they were able to pass along to Siblings.

In the translations from generation to generation a significant amount has been lost. Primarily these losses would include: work ethic, dedication to saving, living within our means, and expectations of what is due to us.

The depression was particularly sorrowful because there was little in the way of "social safety nets". Thank heavens, our socialization has introduced safety nets, but they have come at a human price.

The safety nets have taught us to strive for more, and not worry about the future, because if the economy or we falter, we will be saved. In fact we have come to expect the safety nets will maintain our lifestyle and we don't need to make any sacrifices.

We've lost the desire or ability to fend for ourselves, and if "we can't make it", then government and society must "maintain us in the life to which we have become accustomed".

As one wonders if we are living beyond our means, the time is appropriate to do some self analysis.

Even though the world has been involved in an economic meltdown for the past year, we are still clamouring to "get more" and fail to realize all these wants must be paid back, and often at a time we can ill afford.

The provincial budget introduced last Thursday proves the point.

Here we are, as families or a community, struggling each month to keep our head above water and we persist in "wanting more" and blaming our elected officials if we don't get it.

It doesn't make a bit of difference if we are talking about municipal, provincial or federal representatives.

Let me use this point to illustrate how we have faltered.

Since the turn of the decade, basically starting in 2003 until last year, Nova Scotia has been enjoying hundreds of millions of dollars annual as Royalty taxes from natural gas. Did we contact elected officials and ask them to "save for a rainy day"? No we wanted the money squandered on things we could have done without.

Some will disagree with me. However, if it had not been for natural gas, how would we have lived? What would we have done?

We can always blame government and the public service for a lot of things. However, we certainly can't blame them for spending the money.

We've trained them that if they don't give us what we want, we'll vote them out of office at the first opportunity. So in order for them to keep their jobs, they must succumb to our wishes.

Nova Scotians must make radical changes in their "wish list" and now is the time to start. We have a majority government so it should be four years before we head back to the polls.

In the meantime, as voters, we need to deliver a message to all elected officials: We'll vote you out of office if you don't reduce government expenditures: Spend only on necessities; don't give any wage increases to the public sector; ensure everyone lives within their means.

If the nearly one million of us adopt this attitude, within a decade, we would be one of the most prosperous provinces in Canada. We have the resources and we should not give them away.

Maurice

Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.

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A Dull Market is a Good Market in Real Estate

Highs and lows get more attention, but balance is best for the economy

On September 16th, the Nova Scotia Association of Realtors® announced the average price for MLS® home sales from June to August was \$197,007, up 5.7 per cent over the same three months in 2008.

A total of 3436 homes sold through the MLS® System in Nova Scotia from June to August 2009, only down 3.5 per cent from one year earlier. The dollar value of these home sales totalled \$676.9 million during the period, up two per cent year-over-year.

"We are pleased to see the numbers coming close to what they were during this period last year. It's the highs and lows in real estate that seem to get the most attention among

media and the public, but it's balance that we as an Association enjoy reporting most," says Linda Smardon, President of the Nova Scotia Association of Realtors®. "When we achieve balance in the market it means good opportunities for buyers and sellers and ultimately, that's what makes for a healthy market and strong economy."

While Nova Scotia's market is currently still leaning towards a buyer's market, the new residential listings on the MLS® system continue to decline. At 7542 units, they are down 6.9 per cent from June to August 2008.

In Halifax-Dartmouth, there were 2072 MLS® home sales from June to August, an increase of 0.8 per cent from the previous year. The

total value of sales was \$490 million, up five per cent year-over-year.

In the area covered by the Annapolis Valley Real Estate Board, there were 423 MLS® home sales from June to August, a decrease of 3.9 per cent. The total value of these home sales amounted to \$62.4 million, a 0.5 per cent increase from the dollar volume of one year earlier.

Average prices from June to August 2009 in regions across the Province:

REGION	AVERAGE PRICE: COMPARED TO:	
	JUNE - AUGUST 2009	JUNE - AUGUST 2008
Cape Breton	\$109,783	Down 2.8%
Halifax-Dartmouth	\$236,507	Up 4.2%
Highland Region	\$143,998	Up 10.2%
Northern Region	\$122,430	Up 7.8%
South Shore	\$159,577	Up 1.6%
Yarmouth	\$116,627	Down 7%
Annapolis Valley	\$147,609	Up 4.5%
Provincial	\$197,007	Up 5.7%

Can you have your video games and your activity too?

By Matt Pryde

There is a lot of controversy right now surrounding physical activity and video games. On one hand, we all know that video games, television and computers are three of the biggest factors; all related to technology in general, that has led to today's sedentary lifestyles. On the other hand, there are companies out there that are making an attempt at combining screen time and physical activity together in an attempt to make people of all ages more active.

It's a given, for the most part, technology has made our jobs less active, and then we get home and sit in front of the TV. What if there was an answer for this problem? Games like Wii Fit and Dance Dance Revolution (DDR) are meant to help get our bodies moving while having fun and still participating in video games. But do they really work?

There are schools throughout Canada that have begun making DDR and the Wii regular components of their physical education classes. There are even schools in our own School Board here in Nova Scotia that have the systems in their student lounges. It is true that these games must be better for you than just a joystick and a TV, but there is a lot of concern that these games are being promoted, not just by the companies that designed them, but now by our schools, as a real physical activity option.

Right now researchers from the University of Calgary and Mount Royal College are performing a study looking at whether active gaming devices such as the Wii Balance Board and DDR have health benefits for

kids. For five years, they will measure whether the games have any impact on the cardiovascular fitness, balance and agility of children in Grades 3 and 4. So over the next few years, the truth will come out.

Even though games like DDR will keep you moving, until proven otherwise I would recommend that nothing can replace 'real' play. Not only because of the health benefits associated with active play, but also the social aspect, I doubt very much that anything can replace that. Get outside and enjoy the summer. If the Wii is the only option for you, make sure you don't take any shortcuts and follow through with the actions as much as possible to gain the physical benefits. Get the kids outside and run around with them. I promise it will be far more rewarding than staring at a TV.

If you have any questions about physical activity, feel free to contact me at matthew.pryde@gov.ns.ca.

Matt Pryde is Fundy Active Communities Coordinator



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