

opinion

TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

New Brunswick's Newspaper, Founded in 1862

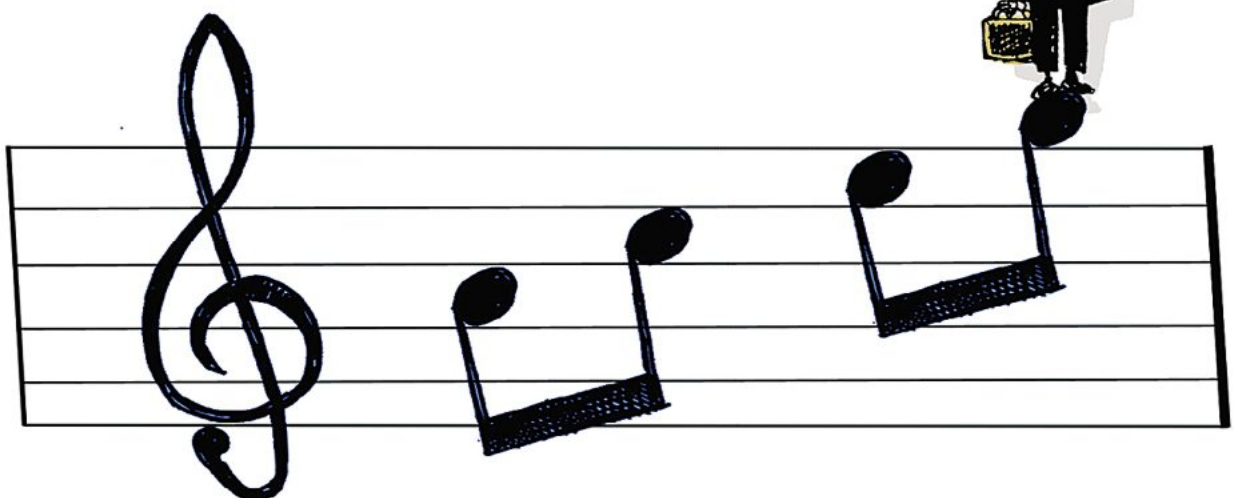
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MAYOR OF SAINT JOHN ALLEGRO 2012 - 2016



ENDING ON A HIGH NOTE

Gregory Boyd
TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

Solving illiteracy depends on us

THE PROVINCE'S LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR AND HER husband have issued a challenge to New Brunswickers to become personally involved to improve our chronically low literacy rates.

Jocelyne Roy-Vienneau and her husband, Ronald, have pledged to volunteer time in the province's schools this winter, working one-on-one with children who struggle to read.

We salute this act of leadership from the Vienneaus, in no small part because it underscores a key truth about illiteracy – it isn't a problem that government alone could or should address. The inability of a large part of our population to read is a problem for all of us. And we should all strive to be part of the solution.

Nearly one in four young New Brunswick students struggle to read, according to recent test scores. More than 50 per cent of adult New Brunswickers lack the full reading comprehension skills to understand more complex texts.

There are data that points to a solution. Studies show the right amount of one-on-one help for students who are not at reading level by Grade 2 can translate into long-term literacy skills.

That's where the Elementary Literacy Friends (ELF) program comes into play. The non-profit organization matches volunteers with struggling readers. Each volunteer – like the lieutenant-governor and her husband – commit to a minimum of 20 hours of one-on-one reading time with a child. The results, in schools around the province where ELF is in place, have been dramatic, with the average ELF participant advancing two reading levels.

The cost to society of allowing one quarter of our children to leave school without the ability to read is incalculable. There are greater demands on our social services and under-employment, which too often leads to addiction problems and crime. More than that, there is the wasted potential and foregone contributions from those who aren't equipped with the basic skills needed in the modern economy and society.

A 20-hour commitment to the ELF program at your neighbourhood school, two hours per week working with a struggling reader, can be a rewarding experience for the volunteer – and a life-altering relationship for a seven-year-old child.

If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes an entire province to create a literate child. Solving New Brunswick's literacy problem won't come from extra government money; it will happen because more people follow the lead of our lieutenant-governor and act.

Norton legacy should be blueprint for city

SAINT JOHN MAYOR MEL NORTON SURPRISED MANY people – including his own council – by announcing this week he will not re-offer in the May 9 municipal election.

Mr. Norton leaves an impressive legacy in just four years as mayor. That legacy includes better roads, improved recreational facilities, a settled city pension issue, a record of solid financial stewardship, a clean drinking water project, and perhaps most importantly, some hope and optimism for a more prosperous economic future.

No matter how you view that scorecard, it's a stunning success. We are disappointed he has decided not to re-offer and urge his successor to follow his blueprint.

When Mr. Norton won election as mayor in 2012, the city was in a near crisis state. Within eight months, he led the city and employees to sign a new shared-risk pension plan that cut benefits but preserved the long-term sustainability of the plan.

Over the next four years, he led council in sticking to four priorities – roads, clean water, better recreational facilities and economic development. On all four points, he has made progress.

Saint John continues record-setting spending for roads. It has an agreement for a \$230 million clean drinking water project. Recreational facilities have been upgraded (Harbour Passage, Emera Park), opened (the new YMCA) or planned (the athletic fieldhouse).

Mr. Norton has accomplished all this while holding the tax rate steady even as the city's tax base stagnated. There's a new culture of financial discipline at City Hall and council meetings have a sense of decorum and political purpose.

Mel Norton was the right mayor for Saint John at the right time. Those offering for Common Council this spring should ensure we do not lose the momentum he has built.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rothesay bylaws are being ignored

In your article on the Rothesay Common traffic problems, Coun. McGuire admits that traffic problems around the Common are longstanding.

This begs the question: Why did council vote in favour of spending millions on a project that would only make a bad situation worse?

If council had followed its own bylaws, Coun. McGuire's knowledge of traffic congestion might have forced a rethink of the Rothesay Common as a location for new development. Instead council ignored them, including the traffic bylaw restricting parking to the west side of Gondola Point Road.

Cars are parked on both sides and someone is going to get hurt. How can this be a good problem to have as suggested by the councillor? Does he not see the safety risk in creating increased traffic congestion?

If a bigger and better outdoor rink/skating oval was going to be popular, why wasn't it put on a site where Rothesay citizens would not have to risk life and limb competing with vehicles because there is no onsite parking.

One thing we do know, fixing this problem is going to take a lot more money and it can only come from one source, Rothesay taxpayers.

Jim Crosby
Rothesay

Let's entice more manufacturing firms

I read with great interest the article "Ex-premier pitches idea to boost population," (Jan 12) where former premier Frank McKenna says we need more people in New Brunswick and to entice refugees and immigrants to the province.

Can he or someone please explain to me how this would win the "budget war?"

I would logically think enticing manufacturing companies into the province would create work and the answer to the "budget war."

David MacKay
Saint John

Will Gagetown ferry return to service?

The Gagetown ferry has not been running since Dec. 1, 2015. This is because it is no longer suitable for winter use. Now the communities that rely on this transportation link are wondering if the ferry will ever return to service.

It is of great importance for workers, business owners, families, friends,

farmers, tourists, and all those New Brunswickers who enjoy the Lower St. John River.

The businesses in Gagetown, Jemseg and Cambridge Narrows are dependent on traffic from both sides of the river. The loss of this service will be devastating to these communities as it is critical to the social and economic fabric of this area.

Roads leading to the Village of Gagetown were impassable for several days following the rain storm of Sept. 30, 2015. The only access for emergency vehicles was by way of the ferry, which operated around the clock.

At present there is no plan to repair or replace the ferry. If you have concerns about the loss of this ferry service please let your voice be heard. Contact the Premier's office, Minister Roger Melanson and your elected representative.

Andrew MacInnis
Lower Jemseg

Amputee program proves beneficial

I am a double leg amputee and a member of The War Amps Child Amputee (CHAMP) Program. I was recently fitted with running legs thanks to public support of The War Amps Key Tag Service.

I joined a local track team and my new legs have enabled me to keep up and given me the confidence to compete with my peers. With my running legs, I can stay active and do more physical activities.

2016 marks the 70th anniversary of The War Amps Key Tag Service and to date, more than 1.5 million sets of lost keys have been returned to their owners.

Although it is a free service, donations provide young amputees with financial assistance for artificial limbs and, while growing up, allow us to go to regional seminars with our parents where we learn about the latest in artificial limbs and meet others just like us.

Thank you to everyone who has supported The War Amps Key Tag Service, which has helped Canadian amputees like me for the past 70 years.

Matthew Nutter
Kingston

Case shows need for guaranteed income

Kudos to the Telegraph-Journal not only for publishing the situation of Ms. Tammy Helm, but also for following up.

Appreciation as well to Doug Leaman and Jim Miller and other

compassionate persons who pitched in, in specific ways.

But what about other persons about whom we know not? What about children living in poverty? Who speaks for them? For far too many New Brunswickers, struggles remain.

What is required is a guaranteed annual income for Ms. Helms, and for the others in similar situations. That would demand of us who have income beyond our immediate need to pay higher taxes. That might be accomplished by road tolls, a higher HST. Best of all, a progressive income tax.

A progressive tax is a tax in which the tax rate increases as the taxable amount increases. With that process, all of us would be pitching in – fair for everybody.

Eldon Hay
Sackville

Don't develop area plagued by flooding

I see the editorial board is keen on the development of the marsh lands between the MacKay Highway and the Ashburn Lake Road. I am compelled to ask "why?"

I would like to point out that development does not come cheap. Nor is it borne solely by the developer.

Once the utilities are in place, the respective departments – water, sewerage, and transportation (roads) – assume responsibility. True, the city collects fees for services rendered, but if the residential development at Drury Cove is any indication, the citizens of Saint John will be paying to maintain these services for some time because development never seems to progress as promised.

Specifically: In 2006 there were more than 60 lots serviced in Drury Cove. There was an expansion of serviced lots between then and 2011 when the developer estimated there could be as many as 500 houses built. In 2016 there are 18 houses and 10 condos in the "Highlands of Drury Cove." True, the residents of this neighbourhood contribute mightily in the form of property taxes, but the taxes collected cannot possibly be sufficient to cover costs borne by the city...i.e. the taxpayers of Saint John.

Do we want to foot the bill on yet another elaborate development scheme in an area that floods whenever it rains?

Regardless of assurances from ACAP-SJ that proposed plans will prevent flooding, I think it irresponsible to promote development in one of the few remaining wetlands in an area plagued by flooding.

Debra Lindsay
Saint John

SUBMISSIONS: Letters must bear the writer's name, address and daytime telephone number and be between 100 and 300 words in length. We prefer letters that respect the word count, are on a single subject currently in the news and contain no personal attacks. We will consider opinion articles on any subject. All submissions must be original, should not have been previously published other than in a Brunswick

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