

OPINION

TELEGRAPH JOURNAL

NEW BRUNSWICK'S NEWSPAPER, FOUNDED IN 1862

JOHN WISHART, BNI EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

DAVID STONEHOUSE, MANAGING EDITOR
MARK IYBE, SENIOR EDITOR
DAVID SPRAGG, EDITOR, ADMINISTRATION
ERIC MARKS, EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR

JANE NORTHRUP, REGIONAL ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

MOVE; DON'T JUST SHUFFLE

New Brunswickers who look to Premier David Alward's cabinet shuffle for a hint of the future have been given little to ponder. While some portfolios have changed hands, the personalities at the cabinet table are the same.

What does Premier David Alward expect his ministers to do differently, during the last year of his mandate? What are the problems he believes his government must overcome, and what solutions are the Conservatives proposing?

This is what taxpayers want to hear; the issue of who is staffing which ministry is irrelevant.

The challenges facing the Conservatives are not a great deal different than the challenges that Premier Shawn Graham faced in 2009. Chief among them are the challenge of creating jobs in a near-moribund economy, and the challenge of executing policy solutions that legislators believe to be right in the face of sustained and vocal opposition.

The Alward government has introduced significant structural changes in health care. It has re-aligned school districts and begun the process of consolidating aging and sparsely populated schools. It has adopted a new, transparent and accountable model for attracting out-of-province investment. It has introduced a model of regional governance, albeit one with flaws; and it has pledged to develop natural resources, such as shale gas, provided they can be extracted safely.

That's not a bad start, but so much more remains to be accomplished.

It has become almost customary for governments seeking re-election to re-arrange cabinet portfolios and set about convincing the public that ministers need four more years of political mandate to deliver results.

The Alward government does not have this luxury. Its members can see the "silver tsunami" of the baby boomers' retirement from the workforce approaching and anticipate the impact it will have on public services, provincial revenues and the economy. They also can see new economic opportunities for New Brunswick to seize and policy shortcomings that must be addressed, from health care, education and resource extraction to education, social development and local government.

History will judge this government on the results it achieves. Knowing this, every member of cabinet must strive to define New Brunswick's problems, adopt effective solutions and deliver better performance.

Ministers must do this, not for the sake of re-election, but for the sake of the 750,000 New Brunswickers they serve.



Region needs one Board of trade

Across Greater Saint John, business owners and business associations have been meeting with their colleagues from neighbouring communities.

The objective of these talks is to determine whether businesses will commit to the creation of a single regional board of trade.

We hope a consensus develops quickly, because there are signs that neither municipal councils nor the regional service commission understand how to enable growth in Greater Saint John's economy. A regional board of trade could help governments and economic development agencies define those problems that have limited local business development, preparing the way for more informed political debate on ways to seek and achieve growth.

Continuing to take a fragmented approach to economic development would be futile.

In a global economy, it is difficult for business-owners to be heard as New Brunswickers, let alone as residents of this city or that town.

Investors are looking for regional solidarity, because in national and international terms, Greater Saint John is a single metropolitan area, with a single industrial and consumer economy. Accordingly, businesses in the region need to begin speaking together, as members of a single community.

If area businesses agree to form a single chamber of commerce, we believe the region will have a better chance of securing out-of-province investment.

Mayors and councils want development; often, though, they do not understand what obstacles stand in the way of growth.

A single board of trade, working with councils, Enterprise Saint John, Port Saint John and the Saint John Airport, would generate more informed debate. It might even spur members of the Fundy Regional Services Commission to adopt more effective policies.



Province needs industrial jobs

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I must say that I wholeheartedly agree with the thoughts expressed by Lorne Amos! I am so glad to see a few people that agree with pipeline and fracking proposals are now expressing their opinions. These pages have been filled with all the naysayers and pseudo-environmentalists of late.

Weneed these jobs and resources for our economy to survive. Ladies and gentlemen, how do we otherwise attain all that you are asking for – lower taxes, better roads, more jobs, etc. – without these industries? If we don't do something soon we will be and appendage of another Atlantic province.

I realize you want your children and loved ones to stay here and work and earn a decent living; well, these are going to give them those opportunities along with spinoff jobs and business that will happen once things get rolling.

I have read people's ideas for more jobs such as more farms to raise more local products. First of all, do you actually realize that farming is one of the toughest jobs on the planet? And can you honestly tell me that your college educated children will stay here to work on a farm? I think not.

I have also read here about a work force to refurbish houses. Are your children going to do that for a living? And who would be living in these homes?

I will just close with this comment written by someone much smarter than I: Nothing changes if nothing changes.

INA MCLEOD
Saint John

NB Power will work with public

I was dismayed to learn through a letter from former Lieutenant-Governor Hermenegilde Chiasson that a recent NB Power cutting and pruning operation in Grand Barachois has caused distress to some property owners.

I have assured M. Chiasson personally, as I am now publicly, that we will work closely with him and his neighbours to address the concerns and that here at NB Power we are always looking for ways to improve.

NB Power has been working hard during the last several months to prepare for the fall and winter storm seasons. As we have seen in recent weeks, heavy rain and high winds can cause trees and branches to fall on lines causing power outages. In winter

the threat becomes worse. Last year alone downed trees caused 36 per cent of outages in New Brunswick.

We strive to strike a balance between maintaining the natural beauty of our surroundings and reliability of the system.

Our greatest responsibility is to ensure our customers are safe and warm, and our tree maintenance program is intended to ensure we are as prepared as possible for the increasingly unpredictable storms that sweep through our region every fall and winter.

We will work with all of our customers to make sure their concerns can be addressed, and that they understand and feel comfortable with the reasons behind our approach.

We are a company made up of New Brunswickers who listen to our customers and are always willing to improve, while taking our safety, environmental and reliability responsibilities seriously.

GAETAN THOMAS
President and CEO
NB Power

Turned a corner; hit the wall

David Alward has a new slick pre election television commercial paid for by the public. The premier claims that energy prices are stable and that the province has turned a corner.

If we turned a corner then we must have hit a wall. Petroleum prices are at record highs and electricity rates are rising and will need to rise even higher to pay for the Lepreau mismanagement. We are tied for the highest unemployment rate in Canada and more people are leaving to work elsewhere. Family wages are low compared to the national average and tuition and other fees are high. Does the premier think the public is stupid or has he lost touch with reality?

I am well off and optimistic but I cannot argue with those who distrust government or industry, since it is hard to disagree with facts. Rail transportation regulations were more than sufficient, according to government and industry, and the naysayers were just anti-everything. I believed the government, but events proved me wrong and the dead in Lac Megantic paid the price - not government, not the rail company and not the oil refinery.

History should teach us to be sceptical and demand proof and accountability from government and industry.

TOM HICKIE
Fredericton

Harper record: worst since R.B.

You can bet your bottom dollar that Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Speech from the Throne on Oct. 16 will assert repeatedly that his government is "focused on jobs and growth". But just saying it doesn't make it true. In fact, Mr. Harper has the worst economic growth record since the dismal days of R.B. Bennett.

When he first took power in 2006, he was handed a steadily growing economy which had generated 3.5 million net new jobs, declining debt and taxes, a decade of balanced budgets, annual surpluses at about \$13-billion, and fiscal flexibility projected ahead five years totaling \$100-billion.

That's what Mr. Harper had to work with – the most robust fiscal situation in the western world. And he blew it in less than three years.

It's now four full years since the recession ended, and still our national economy remains sluggish and uncertain with vast disparities among different regions, sectors and demographic groups.

In response, this government has only one monotonous and ineffectual prescription – austerity, austerity and more austerity.

Mr. Harper's basic problem is having no credible plan for economic growth. You cannot hack-and-slash your way to prosperity.

It's time for a government that will be on Canadians' side, encouraging us to be hopeful and ambitious once again – about our own prospects and about the future of our country.

RALPH GOODALE, Deputy
Leader
Liberal Party of Canada

Be proactive, save lives

This morning, I once again awoke with the same vision in my head of a certain animal that continually occupies my thoughts on a daily basis. I've always loved animals - all animals. A glimpse at their eyes and you see what's inside; sometimes excitement, sometimes it's concern, fear, sadness, love – I've seen it all.

Animals are capable sentient beings, showing emotions but missing a "voice". They are under human control. They look to their owners as providers, and in return they give back the glorious gift, which anyone could ever hope to receive – unconditional love. They never judge you.

Certain organizations do the best they can, within the Law.

Unfortunately, what they are allowed to do is not good enough. A simple solution – amend the existing legislation. How? Call upon your MLA and voice your concerns. With the numerous letters being published as of late in local papers, it is obvious that animal welfare is most certainly important to many.

Some may say that the NB SPCA Act will not change anytime soon. Why not? If this is important to the citizens, it can happen.

Government officials are obligated to listen.

It's time for all of us to stand up and speak out. Together we will be the "voice" for the animals that continue to suffer neglect and abuse on a daily basis. Wake up New Brunswick! It's time for change!

Copper This is for you.

CAROLYN WALSH
People for Pronged Animal
Protection (PFSAP)
Miramichi

Values charter is an outrage

Canadians are outraged by the Marois government and their introduction of an intolerant and exclusionary Charter of Quebec Values, which bans religious garments and too-visible religious jewellery. Quebec is a secular province that is out of sync with the rights of minorities and our Constitution. Religions deserve protection from their over-reaching power.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper predicted the demise of this repugnant Charter because of the common sense of Quebecers. The Bouchard-Taylor Report on accommodation in Quebec concluded that all rights are deemed equal to both the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms because "Everyone must be recognized as equal in dignity, a principle that is embodied in rights and freedoms."

The Supreme Court of Canada in a 1998 secession reference case confirmed that respect for minorities is one of Canada's four core values.

This Charter doesn't represent our proud reputation of equality and tolerance that has made Canada the choice of home for so many citizens from around our globe.

Many cities, former premiers, politicians and groups in Quebec are rejecting this document. Congratulations!

HAROLD PHALEN
Fredericton