

# OPINION

TELEGRAPH JOURNAL

NEW BRUNSWICK'S NEWSPAPER, FOUNDED IN 1862

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## SHARE THE RISK, RESPONSIBILITY

New Brunswick's shared-risk pension model has been condemned by retired civil servants and praised by pundits as far afield as the New York Times.

In New Brunswick, the emotional arguments against adopting this model have been aired far more often than the rational arguments behind it. We believe government needs to make a stronger case for this foresighted defence of taxpayers.

Those making the argument that "a contract is a contract" seem oblivious to two realities. The first is that current pension guarantees are only as good as the province's fiscal health. The second is that legislators not only have the legal power to adopt new pension legislation, they have a fiduciary duty to do so, if reforms are needed to protect the public good – for example, to protect the integrity of public services alongside the integrity of public-sector pensions.

New Brunswick's shared-risk pension model represents a bold attempt to protect both. By splitting the responsibility for topping up underfunded pensions between the government and its employees, and establishing a series of thresholds that out-of-control pension plans must pass before retiree benefits can be touched, this proposal will yield greater security to retirees while also offering greater protection to taxpayers and public services.

In focusing narrowly on contractual benefits that the province cannot honour without risking fiscal collapse, the critics of shared risk are ignoring a broader contract – the social contract between legislators, civil servants and the public. As Michael Wong, an astute economist and former civil servant has observed, the governments and union leaders who negotiated New Brunswick's current pension obligations had no idea that retirees would leave the workplace so young or live for so long in retirement, or that defined-benefit pension plans would one day push businesses and governments to the brink of bankruptcy.

Today, we do know this, and the issue must be dealt with. New Brunswickers cannot continue to waste hundreds of millions of tax dollars back-stopping public-sector pension plans, at enormous cost to government and the taxpayers who fund its operations.



## Build a regional board of trade

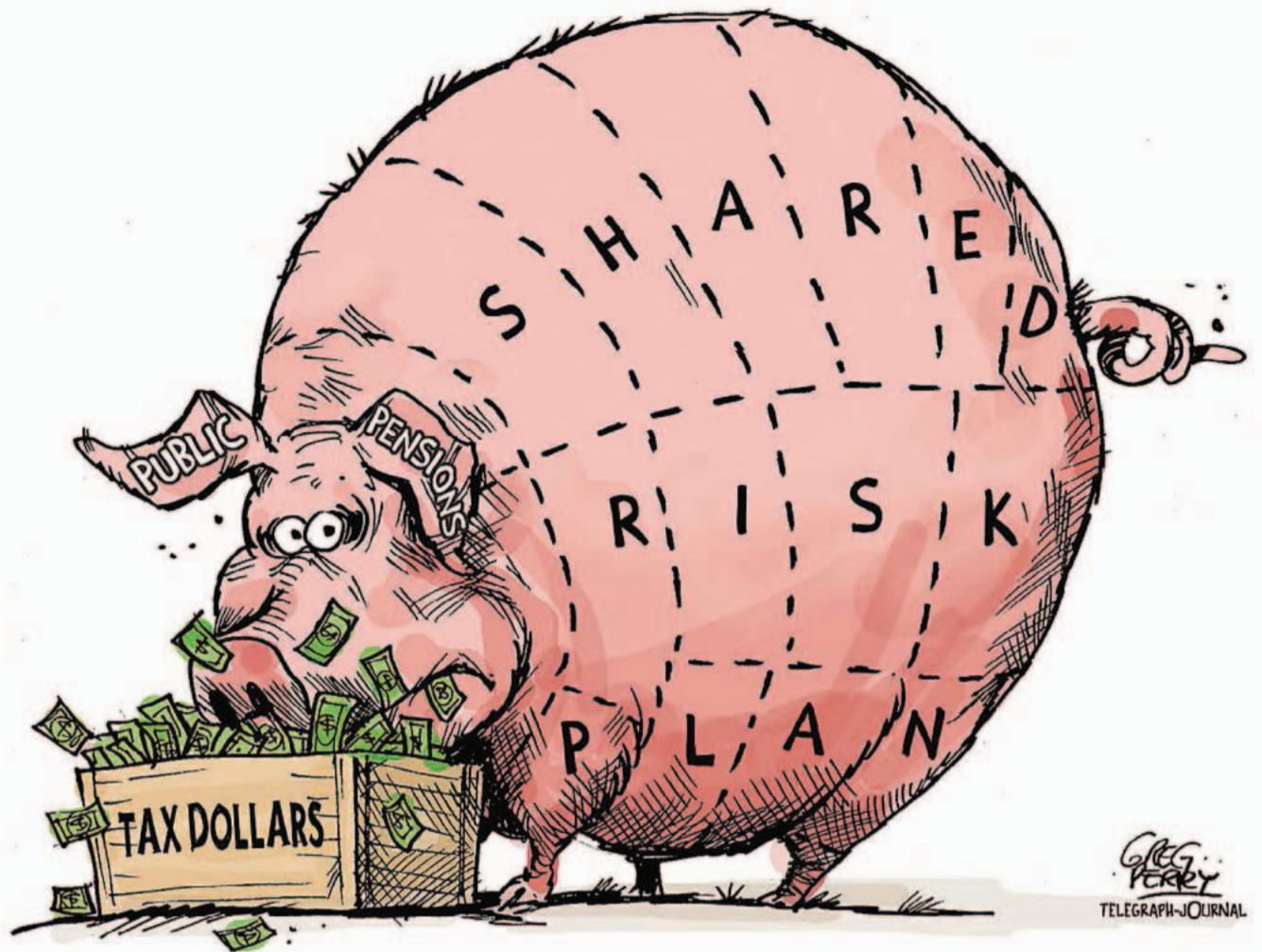
While some municipal councils representing communities in Greater Saint John seem reluctant to discuss the development of regional services, such as policing, boards of trade in the region are discussing the "a" word: amalgamation.

We see the discussions taking place among local boards of trade as representative of conversations across Greater Saint John. While many of the area's municipal leaders seem wedded to a parochial, 1950s conception of how the economy and governance should function, citizens are increasingly aware of the need to work together if the separate communities of Greater Saint John are to secure economic growth. The movement to amalgamate community boards of trade into a single board that can speak decisively for businesses throughout the region is part of this social evolution.

Neighbouring boards of trade naturally have different interests in how economic development should proceed – how could they not, with the economy of Saint John and that of Grand Bay-Westfield or the Kennebecasis so different? But to a large extent, the businesses of this region serve the same customers. They have a common interest in expanding their customer base, improving air access to Saint John and increasing the volume of wealth that circulates through the region via commerce. And their members will benefit in common from new industrial development, whether it takes the form of a west-to-east oil pipeline, new marine terminal and refinery expansion or the creation of fertilizer processing plants.

If the separate boards of trade do agree to amalgamate, we suggest they learn from the limitations of the Fundy Regional Services Commission and establish a governance structure that is not defined by community representation and municipal politics.

If businesses that compete for their livelihoods can see the value of working together for growth, surely municipal mayors and councils can make a greater effort to embrace constructive and cost-effective regionalization. To be heard in the global economy, Greater Saint John must speak with one voice, like a true metropolitan area.



## Grandfather thanks emergency personnel

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I have always had nothing but the utmost respect for those people in the emergency services sector of our society. During the past several months we have seen them in action in many places around our country and around the world. Whether it was a train derailment in Quebec, flooding in Alberta or an accident on the McKay Highway these men and women are usually the first on the scene to assist strangers in distress.

In the early morning hours of Saturday, Aug. 3 my granddaughter fell from the Boardwalk at Market Slip to the rocks six meters below. While I slept these emergency responders were on the scene rescuing this fine young woman from this horribly tragic accident.

On behalf of my granddaughter and our family I extend to all those people who were involved in that rescue our profound, heartfelt thanks. The expertise and care with which you carried out the rescue combined with your sensitivity, compassion and kindness is a tribute to you and all those who deal in emergency services everywhere.

Our sincere thanks, also, to the doctors, nurses and staff at the Saint John Regional Hospital who were there to administer proper medical attention through this life threatening ordeal.

While her injuries were severe my granddaughter is recovering well and we are looking forward to the day when she can resume her normal activities.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you.

FRED GRASS  
Nerepis

### The young are leaving

Yet another friend is considering moving out West! It simply isn't realistic for a young family with three children to make a go of it in New Brunswick. We are ultimately being forced to leave our friends and extended family members behind and move across the country. Why aren't more people fighting to change this trend? In July a friend drove out West for work. Another flew out recently. We may be next, and our friends may be close behind us.

Yes, the cost of living out West is higher, but the pay is double and the opportunities are plentiful. Someday New Brunswick will

wake up and see that all of the under-40 population has moved. Then what? Why would new business want to come here if everyone is leaving?

Unless some major changes take place, you will see a quickly diminished population.

JACQUELINE BELLIVEAU  
Riverview

### Start treating Lyme disease

Isn't it great that the Public Health Agency is finally admitting that Lyme disease does exist in Canada? It's about time.

I realize that many doctors have limited experience with Lyme, but that doesn't mean that it should be ignored.

Perhaps it's because they're afraid to speak out, because it appears that any doctor brave enough to treat Lyme patients is persecuted by the Medical Society and often lose their licences or choose to give them up.

In my opinion, this is simply unacceptable. Luckily, I was able to find a doctor to treat me, and I was feeling better than I had in years.

Unfortunately, he has disappeared, nowhere to be found. No one should have to leave the province or the country to get help. As far as I know, at this time, there are no doctors in Canada treating this horrible disease.

It's very expensive to go elsewhere for treatment and most patients can't afford it, so they suffer in silence having been made to think that "It's all in our heads." It may be, but it's also throughout the rest of their bodies.

We shouldn't have to "sneak" around to get treatment as if we are in the wrong. Lyme patients need help and they need it now.

Our health officials need to "Give their heads a shake." We all know it exists, so do something constructive about it, please.

RENA LEAN  
Douglas

### Canada does import chickens

The Conference Board chooses spurious arguments in its recent attack on Canada's supply management sectors, including the myth that Canada's market is closed for dairy, poultry and eggs.

Canada is the 15th largest importer of chicken in the world. We import more chicken than most Trans Pacific Partnership countries combined, including the U.S., and it's imported either duty-free or at 5.4 per cent.

New Zealand isn't the shining star of international trade. As the

report states, when you include its phony non-tariff barriers, it's more trade restrictive than Canada. Canada imports 10 per cent of its chicken consumption; New Zealand imports nothing.

As for not allowing interprovincial movement of chicken, so far this year, more than 40 million kilograms of live chicken has moved between provinces, and chicken meat flows from one end of the country to the other, unrestricted.

This isn't a one-sided food trade policy for Canada – it's a one-sided argument against supply management without good reason.

DAVE JANZEN  
chairman  
Chicken Farmers of Canada

### Let's reform Canada's Senate

Ireland is having a referendum on abolishing their Senate while Canadians are angry and disgusted with the entitlement mentality of some Canadian senators such as Mike Duffy, Mac Harb and Pamela Wallin.

Patrick Brazeau, who is 38, could earn millions from now to his retirement. Canadians are demanding increased accountability and transparency from this \$90 million-dollar-a-year appointed institution.

Canadians perceive our Senate as outdated and not dynamic enough to meet the needs of a modern democracy.

Senators are all accomplished Canadians such as Noel Kinsella, Romeo Dallaire, Catherine Callbeck, Hugh Segal and Nancy Greene Raine, but being appointed to the Senate is perceived as a patronage reward. It has lost its impetus as a sober second thought and is not protecting and advocating for the rights of less powerful regions of our country.

Their members have completed many outstanding reports with citizens and experts input on poverty, aboriginal rights, equalization, health issues, human rights, education and employment with recommendations. They have accomplished improvements for Canadians in these crucial areas of social justice.

Abolition of the Senate is virtually impossible because of veto power given to different regions and the reality that it is part of Canada's legislative framework and is spelled out in our Constitution.

Reforms and elections that commit to equality, accountability and transparency while decreasing entitlements are keys on the road to restoring their credibility while speaking up for marginalized

Canadians.

HAROLD PHALEN  
Fredericton

### Searching for data on airman

I am trying to locate any family members of Gerald Joseph Boucher of Campbellton who was killed in action on April 25, 1944 aged 19 whilst serving with the RCAF.

His parents were Silva and Olive Boucher. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

To contact email Robin.bycroft@gmail.com or telephone 863.420.1161.

ANTHONY ROBIN BYCROFT  
Polk City, Fla.

### There are green job options

In response to Clarence LeBlanc's letter titled "Anti-development movement hurts," the author rails against citizens who said 'No' to Uranium and Shale Gas in New Brunswick. Bafflingly, he doesn't appear to believe protecting our children's health and future are sufficient reason to oppose certain forms of development.

So, I will indulge him and ask a question of my own: Why, when there are so very many other options available, would the province chose to encourage and create the lowest number of dirty, short-term jobs by developing oil and gas resources?

The answer, of course, is obvious: it's the lowest hanging fruit, and the government is desperate.

How do we replace those potential lost sources of revenue? The Energy East project investment is slated to create around 2,500 jobs. If one were to attract a similar amount of investment in, say, retrofitting homes and buildings to make them more energy efficient, the number of jobs created could top 15,000 with little or none of the inevitable environmental collateral damage. The same investment in renewable energies could result in nearly 20,000 jobs.

But that would require a government with courage and vision, and for people to admit that the way forward requires change. If those happened then maybe we could prevent the next generation from being the first in history to be worse off than the generation that preceded it.

CHARLES DOUCET  
Moncton