

OPINION

TELEGRAPH JOURNAL

NEW BRUNSWICK'S NEWSPAPER, FOUNDED IN 1862

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PUT SOME DETAILS IN HEALTH PLAN

Health Minister Ted Flemming presented the Alward government's five-year plan for health care reform this week. It calls for putting the needs of patients first; providing better community-based preventative care; and managing hospital networks more efficiently.

The direction looks promising. The trouble is, the plan is light on details, and details are what New Brunswickers are looking for.

Liberal Leader Brian Gallant has asserted: "This is not a plan, it's rhetoric." We wouldn't go that far.

Mr. Gallant believes that the five-year plan should have included budget allocations for specific programs, facilities and equipment. We see the reduced level of specific commitments provided by the Minister as evidence of a deliberate change in the culture of government.

Minister Flemming has been up-front about this change, observing that the job of the Department of Health is not to appease constituency-level calls for economic development nor to fulfill the equipment wish-lists of physicians; it is to ensure that New Brunswickers receive the highest quality of care that this province can deliver on a sustainable basis.

How often have ministers of health issue dozens of specific political promises in response to requests from interest groups, but which do not add up to a co-ordinated and sustainable health policy?

Too often, in our view.

Minister Flemming's approach in this plan is not "politics as usual." He has set direction for where the health-care system needs to be in five years' time, letting the CEOs who manage New Brunswick's hospitals figure out the details of how to get there.

While we welcome this shift toward apolitical, results-based management, we believe government needs to acknowledge that the future of health care is an issue that causes great concern to New Brunswickers – in part, because it has been so politicized in the past. The health network CEOs will need to produce measurable goals and benchmarks sooner, rather than later, or many New Brunswickers will give up on this vision of reform.

If Mr. Gallant has some detailed alternatives, the public would no doubt would be glad to hear them, also. It would be a refreshing change from the rhetoric emanating from the opposition benches.



Council shows its business sense

After a week of thinking it over, Saint John councillors rescinded a previous motion and voted unanimously to allow businesses to set their own Sunday shopping hours.

This a wise move, and it reflects the advice provided to council by the Saint John Board of trade, which found most members who cared about the issue wanted the ability to set their own hours.

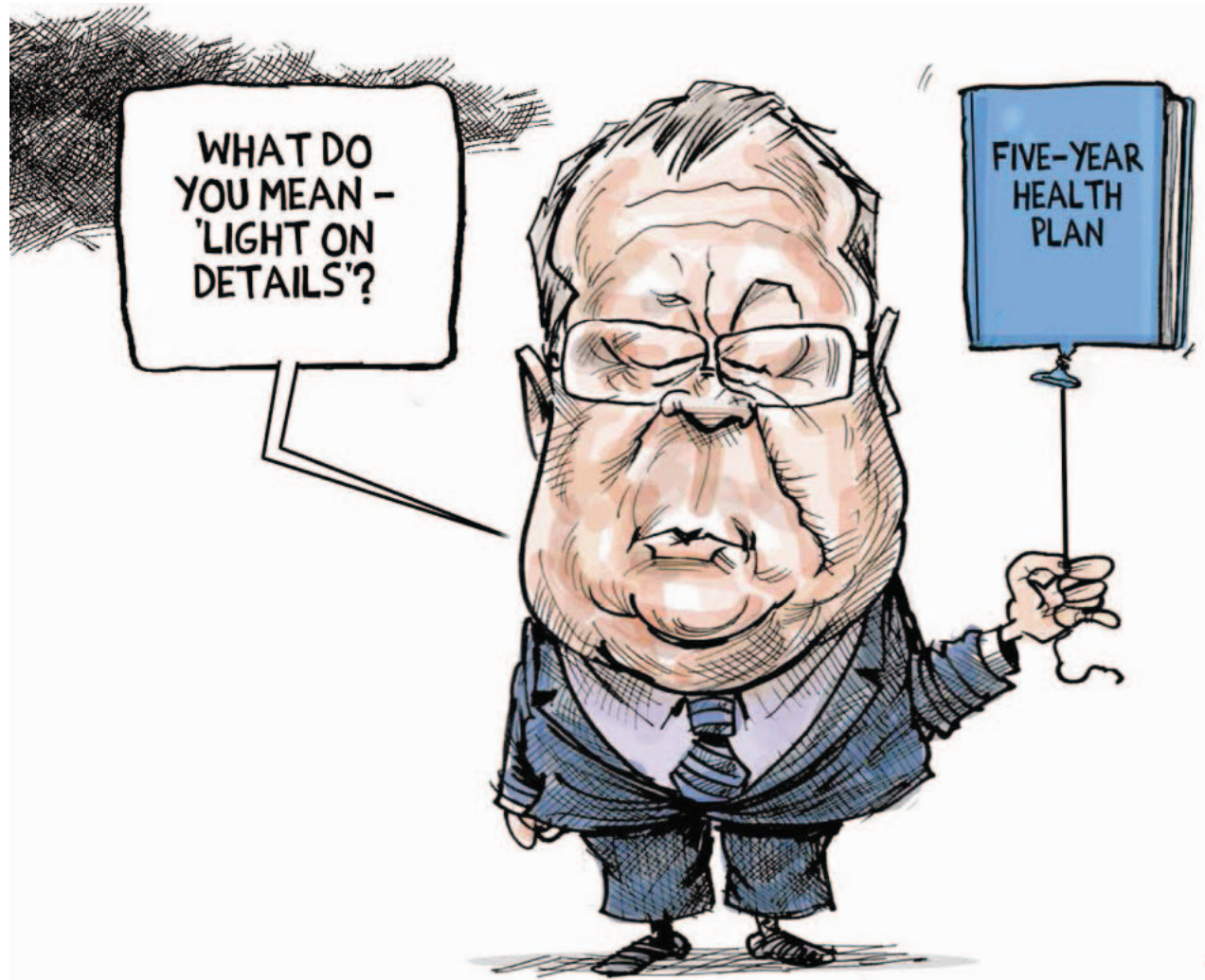
Could it be that after a year of policy decisions which impinge on the ability to conduct business, council has finally realized commerce is integral to growth? We hope so.

Mayor Mel Norton spoke for all of council when he stated, "We need to send every signal we can to the business community to welcome them and provide them with all the tools to be as competitive as possible. We are a relatively small community and we have to compete not just against the region but in fact well beyond this region."

This new business consciousness comes at an opportune time. While Saint John's mayor and council are trying to work with neighbouring communities to bring new growth to the greater metropolitan area, business owners in Greater Saint John are discussing the need for a regional chamber of commerce. Municipal representatives and businesspeople need to keep the lines of communication open if they hope to create an environment where commerce and investment can flourish, generating new jobs and increasing Greater Saint John's population.

Having made a commitment to support growth and improve quality of life, area councils must ask questions that lead to more informed debate and constructive policy. Business owners and business associations must be prepared to join in that debate, bringing the data that councils need to make progressive and responsible decisions.

That is what happened in this case, and we applaud councillors for looking at the data and having the political courage to choose a new policy direction.



Economy down? Let's turn it around

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Increasing debt, declining population and the exodus of young people because of insufficient job opportunities is not the destiny for our region. Try reviving our forestry sector, which has seen an increase in lumber exports, focusing on tourism, developing technology-based programs, training skilled workers, creating an education system that develops the work force of tomorrow, while challenging our best students and increasing the number of innovative businesses through support of the True Growth initiative and chambers of commerce.

Maximizing some of the many opportunities on our horizon will create new companies, thousands of jobs, attracting new families and workers, increasing investments while creating the necessary winning atmosphere. Success is important for our credit rating and retaining the needed revenues for health, education and social programs.

The Energy East Pipeline, Irving Shipyards, Hibernia expansion, Bioscience Research, Muskrat Falls Hydro Project and Deep Panuke are only some of the game-changing opportunities; also Irving Shipyards' \$25 billion contract to build decades of new naval combat federal vessels; our world-class refinery with a ice-free port, which can provide much needed energy for Indian and Chinese markets; and Invest Atlantic, which is encouraging entrepreneurs to compete for projects such as the \$84-billion annually being spent around the globe for tech start-up companies.

These are crucial. We have the talent and commitment that can turn us into a prosperous region of Canada while achieving the dream of having our children return to live and work here.

HAROLD PHALEN
Fredericton

Degrees are not measure of the man

Dr. Louis LaPierre has been the subject of much criticism for a mistake he has acknowledged - and for which he has sincerely apologized.

While I understand the disappointment, I firmly believe the measure of this man is more than his academic credentials. I have known Dr. Louis for almost 25 years. He is a person who has consistently cared about New Brunswick, Acadie, and yes, the

environment. This commitment is not defined by a university degree but by a genuine passion to work with others to move things forward.

Making a difference in the life of a person, community or province is measured by deeds - not degrees. By this evaluation, Dr. LaPierre's contribution is worth remembering. I am proud to call him my friend.

Sincerely,
JAMES K. IRVING
Rothsay

Falsification is serious

As a retired professor I believe the falsification of academic credentials is far more serious than most realize. The matter raises hard questions about hiring and promotion at one of our publicly funded universities as well as the vetting procedures for the Order of Canada.

I believe cheating via claims of inflated scholarly accomplishments is an insult to all colleagues and the hard-working, honest students in post-secondary education. As taxpayers we should require the perpetrators of such acts to forfeit their publicly funded pensions.

FRED DONNELLY
Rothsay

Mission team thanks supporters

I was so happy to have been a member of the large audience on Sunday evening at the Grand Bay Baptist Church, which was blessed beyond measure. This blessing came about because so many talented people performed in support of the Bolivia Mission team who will be going on this mission in May.

There are simply not enough words to express our heartfelt thanks to those who came long distances to perform for us. Reg Gallant, our own local entertainer, once again kept everything going with the help of Allison Inch, whom we are so proud to say lives here in Grand Bay. I know I speak for the team members and for the many people who enjoyed the evening when I say "thank you."

Those attending became part of the mission by their giving. The work the team will be doing in Bolivia will be ridding houses of the insects that cause the dreaded Chagas disease. The 14 team members say "thank you" for attending and for your generosity. They have faith that God will enable them to do His work in

Bolivia and that because of this work many lives will be saved.

PATRICIA PERRIN
Grand Bay-Westfield

Don't let Khadr out

The Telegraph-Journal recently reported two Canadians and countless others deceased in the Kenya mall attack, suicide bombers attacking a Christian church in northwest Pakistan, and zany attacks zeroing in on other atrocities and despicable crazes. All walks of life are denouncing these senseless attacks.

It was also reported that Omar Khadr would make a public appearance before the bench, appealing his detention in an adult prison and hoping to have it declared as illegal. This action is brought about by his Canadian lawyer Dennis Edney, who argues that Omar poses no danger or threat to anyone, and says he was eligible for full parole as of July 1 of this year. Mr. Edney adds that Omar is updating his education at the Edmonton jail facility. What is his point?

Omar Khadr pleaded guilty to five repugnant war crimes, and the government considers he should not be permitted to indiscriminately roam Canadian streets.

I would strongly suggest that Omar Khadr will never achieve rehabilitation status, and that the justice system as we know it will never be perfect; however, it is the best option we currently possess.

What about Khadr's victim, Sgt. Speer, whose wife and two children are left behind? Who will speak for them?

RONALD J. YASCHUK
Quispamsis

Puppy mills are wide problem

Earlier this month 90 dogs were seized from a large-scale commercial breeding operation in Montreal. Many of the mother dogs had likely been confined there for years, and denied their most basic needs.

Although Quebec remains the puppy mill capital of Canada, New Brunswick is not immune. We know what they are, but many will still buy from them. That spontaneous purchase of a tiny bundle of love shouldn't be complicated, right? After all, you have just saved a life. But you have just contributed to the "commercial dog breeding for profit" business.

Mass-production farms and

breeders supply nearly 100 per cent of the dogs sold to pet stores and directly to consumers online and through ads.

Frequently in rescue situations, the dogs are found in poor condition: their coats are matted, nails overgrown, and teeth, eyes and skin infected due to poor genetics and living in unsanitary conditions.

How does someone who is making their puppy purchase know the difference between a puppy mill and a reputable breeder?

The NBSPCA issues kennel licenses, based on minimum requirements of cleanliness, sufficient space and a standard of living conditions. But, does it mean that the NBSPCA supports or recommends these pet establishments? No; it merely means that these kennels have met the minimum requirements for a kennel permit.

The problem is that anyone can breed dogs, and as long as they meet the minimum requirements under the Pet Establishment Act, NBSPCA is obliged to issue a license to them. This needs to change.

SIENNA MUNROE
Fredericton

Don't cast public as the villain

When an uncoordinated young crow fell out of its nest, I caught the hippy-hopping black bundle of feathers and was instantly cast in the role of the villain by its vociferous parents. Their mindless outrage blinded them to the fact I was acting as the rescuer in their avian melodrama. Even after I placed their squawking brat safely in a nearby tree, the parents continued to harangue me with their incessant guttural cawing. When I went outside the next day their crass criticism began again.

Ever since then the local crows have typecast me as the neighbourhood baddie. Recently I decided to live up to their expectations. Whenever the crows rain abuse down on me, I flap my arms and make threatening gestures. This makes for some pretty entraining theatre, although my "fans" can get raucous at times.

No doubt you noticed how I justified my bizarre behaviour by saying I was living up to the expectations of my detractors. I wonder how many corrupt government officials try to justify their behaviour by telling themselves Canadians expect politicians to lie and cheat.

LLOYD ATKINS
Vernon