

'Little else is requisite to carry a state to the highest degree of opulence from the lowest barbarism but peace, easy taxes, and a tolerable administration of justice: all the rest being brought about by the natural course of things.' — Adam Smith

opinion



TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

NEW BRUNSWICK'S NEWSPAPER. FOUNDED IN 1862

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Public safety

N.B. needs its own police force

The Higgs government has prioritized public safety in its current mandate, going so far as to appoint a separate minister to oversee the file. But if Premier Blaine Higgs really wants to make a difference, it's time to consider creating a provincial police force for New Brunswick.

The problems with New Brunswick's current fragmented approach to policing are well known – from a lack of adequate co-operation between existing forces to insufficient control over local policing priorities that are contracted to the federal force. This has resulted in substantial costs for taxpayers, who perversely cannot set many of the policies guiding their own police officers.

Last month, a new collective agreement negotiated between the federal government and the RCMP came into effect, increasing salaries considerably. Constables can now make up to \$20,000 more per year – for a total of up to \$106,576 – while staff sergeants' pay increased by about \$25,000 – for a total of up to \$138,657.

Municipal governments had little to say about the agreement, since they simply contract the RCMP out from the federal government. Yet it's these same governments that will be expected to foot the bill for the increase – which many New Brunswick municipalities cannot afford.

Even municipalities that have their own police forces have proved incapable of keeping costs down. Saint John, for instance, continues to see its efforts at fiscal discipline stymied by policing costs – even as the local force, which ran \$330,000 over budget in 2021, signalled it intends to ask for more funds next year.

The provincial government holds ultimate responsibility for policing in New Brunswick – and it's to the province we now turn.

A provincial police force makes sense for a number of reasons.

First, the province could negotiate wages with the force that reflect the true cost of living here in New Brunswick – and the restrained fiscal capacities of our local governments compared to elsewhere in Canada.

Second, control over the policies and practices governing New Brunswick police would be here in our province, rather than in Ottawa – giving New Brunswickers far more influence over how policing operates.

Finally, the province could mandate greater cost-sharing and regional co-operation – something local police forces in places like greater Saint John have been unwilling to fully explore.

Creating a provincial police force will not be an easy task. Ottawa funds “upwards of a third” of the RCMP's municipal policing, according to Justice Minister Ted Flemming – and that funding role would need to continue.

Restraining wages, meanwhile, would certainly spur backlash from entrenched interests – notably, the police unions.

But ultimately, a provincial police force can lower costs, improve service and increase accountability and transparency in New Brunswick. The Higgs government should get it done.

Featured letter

Keep the Confederation Bridge's name

The proposal to rename the Confederation Bridge strikes me as ridiculous for several reasons.

Advocates of the change have pointed out that the last ferry to Prince Edward Island prior to the bridge's construction was called the Abegweit, and a 1997 naming panel did indeed suggest the bridge be called Abegweit Crossing. But this suggestion was not mandatory, and the federal government chose the name Confederation Bridge for several good reasons.

The current name reflects the physical connection between two provinces that joined Canada early in its history (New Brunswick in 1867 and P.E.I. in 1873). It also underscores that the construction of the bridge required experts from all over Canada and beyond to contribute to the finished project.

Furthermore, the 1997 panel that named the bridge was not Indigenous-led: It was made up of government officials, so to pretend renaming the bridge reflects the will of Indigenous Maritimers simply does not reflect the past record.

Finally, let's not forget the importance of the Charlottetown Conference. It was originally held to discuss the possibility of Maritime Union, but delegates from the Province of Canada (now Ontario and Quebec) also turned up, which led to the creation of a much bigger entity: Canada. If those delegates had not arrived in P.E.I. when they did, then Canada as we know it today (including P.E.I.) may never have come about.

Matthew Maguire
Lorneville

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Russian propaganda is off the mark

Russia's recent Victory Day celebrations commemorating Nazism's defeat merit mention. The conflict in Ukraine was again proclaimed as no less righteous than the defeat of Hitler in 1945. Russian President Vladimir Putin re-articulated incoherent Dostoevskian sentiments about Russian particularism coupled with a resurrection of 19th Century Pan-Slavism – all to eventually displace the West's hegemony.

In other words – it's not just about Ukraine anymore. Future historians will regard this year as an extraordinary inflection point, akin to the Russian Revolution. Putin's megalomania exceeds even that of Napoleon. Too many credulous Western pundits are lamentably disinclined to consider Putin such a madman and are far too willing to accord him the benefit of undeserved doubt. Such dismissal is far too facile and ignores the deep currents of Russian support for Putin's war, predicated on Russians' earnest commitment to yet again denazify Ukraine.

Consider Ukraine's astounding veneration of criminal Nazi collaborators such as Stepan Bandera and other Ukrainian Insurgent Army commanders; a rehabilitation all too remarkable given the UPA was responsible for the slaughter of at least 100,000 Jews and Poles during the Second World War. Ukraine prefers to idolize their former Nazi collaborators as freedom fighters, as heroes even, who struck out in justified self-defence after the horrors of Stalin's Great Purges, and especially after Holodomor's genocide. For eight years now, Russia's false-flag

propaganda execrated Ukraine's neo-Nazi Azov irregulars' attacks targeting Rus-sophones in Ukraine's eastern Donbas. Russian propaganda inflamed fury further, with news reports portraying the Azov irregulars decked in vintage Second World War regalia while belting panegyrics to Bandera. If NATO can intervene in Kosovo to halt genocide – so too Russia in Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk, but for one crucial difference: Genocide in Kosovo was all too real.

Azov yesterday is not Azov today. Today's so-called Ukrainian “Nazis” emphatically embrace a multiparty democracy, are philo-Semitic (even steadfastly loyal to a Jewish president) and remain grateful for Polish solidarity.

Wow! Rearview mirrors are smaller than windshields for good reason.

Thomas Mueller
Saint John

Think again on noise complaints

I would like to comment on a recent column written by Norbert Cunningham (“Save our cities from noisy vehicles,” May 10).

He writes about loud noises from motorcycles and cars, and I agree this is a problem that bylaws may be able to help control. Drivers need to be educated so as not to disturb those around them.

Yet I found the column too one-sided: I have driven a motorcycle for more than 40 years and never had one with loud pipes on it. Neither all motorcycles nor all cars have loud exhausts. At one point, Cunningham even suggests summer car

shows create too much noise, and that if they go elsewhere, “good riddance.”

I have an old car and occasionally go to some of the shows he references. I don't disturb anyone, and don't like being lumped into a category of people who do. Cunningham should think again about seeing off car shows. If they were cancelled, can you imagine the financial impact on our cities?

Cities are supportive of these shows for a reason: They bring in a lot of money, which Cunningham should consider.

Amos Ward
Sackville

Diagnose what ails health care

For far too long, commentaries on the health-care system have bemoaned the current state of affairs, and forecast financial calamity unless the solution is found. Perhaps the solution is multifaceted. In Ken McGeorge's recent column (“Jobs should be on the line over health-care reform,” April 29), “convoluted and complex” systems are noted in health and long-term care that are “buried deeper than can be intelligently exposed.”

Well, the first rule of problem solving is detailed diagnosis. Nothing can be fixed unless the flaws are detailed, and then remedially tackled in priority of the positive results to be achieved.

Let's get on with the diagnosis. Surely, we have the intelligence.

Phillip Hansen
New Maryland

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commentary

Canada must expand access to MAiD

HELEN LONG
COMMENTARY

Canada's assisted dying law is currently under review by the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD). The committee is considering five issues, including advance requests, MAiD for mature minors and those whose sole condition is a mental illness, the state of palliative care and the protection of people with disabilities.

For Canadians, this is not an academic debate – it is about compassion, avoiding suffering and fundamental rights. Survey data shows 86 per cent of Canadians continue to support the Carter v. Canada decision that struck down the federal prohibition on assisted dying in 2015. Moreover, a majority of Canadians support the recent removal of the “reasonably foreseeable” eligibility requirement as determined through the passage of Bill C-7 in March 2021. These are the people from across Canada that we hear from every day, sharing their thoughts and concerns about end-of-life care and choice.

(The survey was conducted by Ipsos from April 19-25, 2022, and included 3,500 Canadian adult respondents from Ipsos's I-Say Panel.)

Until March 2023, those whose sole underlying condition is a mental illness are not eligible to access MAiD. In order to prepare for this, the government established an expert panel on MAiD and mental illness in August 2021. The panel will be releasing a report shortly which will inform protocols and safeguards to be put in place when the exclusion ends.

Dying With Dignity Canada (DWDC) supports the change because a diagnosis of a mental illness should not systematically exclude a person from accessing MAiD; it is unconstitutional, stigmatizing and discriminatory. All MAiD assessments are done on a case-by-case basis, and individuals must meet the rigorous criteria to be eligible for an assisted death. The same rigour would be applied to those whose sole condition is a mental illness.

Consider psychiatrist Dr. Derryck Smith's insight into the reality of suffering from mental illness: “There is no doubt that some forms of psychiatric illness are intractable and incurable. Persons with psychiatric illness suffer the same as those with other diseases, and we should not deprive



The Supreme Court's decision in Carter v. Canada, which led to the legalization of medical assistance in dying, remains popular among the Canadian public, writes Helen Long. PHOTO: ADAM HURAS/PARLIAMENT HILL

these citizens of their rights ... it is necessary to look at the whole person, not just focus in on an isolated medical diagnosis. This is particularly so with mental illness.”

Based on feedback and comments from people across Canada, advance requests for MAiD are the most endorsed issue of the parliamentary review. An advance request for MAiD would allow an individual to describe, in writing, a future state in which they would like to access MAiD. For many, the experience of watching a loved one suffer from a condition like dementia in a way that conflicts with their values in life motivates them to advocate for this option.

Advance requests for MAiD will allow people to record their wishes and avoid a life of grievous and irremediable pain and suffering, if loss of capacity occurs.

“While it is too late for our father who suffers terribly from Lewy Body dementia, my sisters and I want advance requests for MAiD permitted

under the law as soon as possible so we can, if unfortunately diagnosed, avoid the long-term suffering that we have watched our father go through,” explained Tanya (Eusanio) Secord. “It's heart-wrenching and dreadful to witness and we can't imagine the terror he has lived through. We want to be able to control our own end of life in a way that he was not able to.”

Canadians already have the right to provide advance direction regarding treatment options through personal care directives, and DWDC maintains they should have the same right for an advance request for MAiD.

Recent stories in the media have featured people who experience lack of social supports – namely housing – who want to or have accessed MAiD.

“It is important to clarify that no one can receive MAiD on the basis of a lack of social support. A person must have a grievous and irremediable medical condition to be eligible for an assisted death and be approved by two independent assessors. MAiD

assessors and providers work within the parameters of the law; these nurse practitioners and physicians are careful and thoughtful in their work,” said Dr. Chantal Perrot, a MAiD assessor and provider.

Our organization agrees that community resources for mental health, palliative care, disability supports and housing must address the needs of people across Canada – and we applaud the unanimous decision by the House of Commons to adopt a motion regarding the establishment of a disability benefit. But we also believe these can be supported and developed in parallel with changes to the assisted dying law. We cannot deny MAiD to those who are eligible and want to end their suffering because of the failings of these separate systems.

We believe everyone should have both the right to live and the right to choose their end-of-life.

Helen Long
is the CEO of Dying With Dignity Canada.

Axing loan interest a good first step

SYDONA CHANDON
COMMENTARY

On April 13, the Government of New Brunswick announced the elimination of interest on the provincial portion of student loans and a 1.5 per cent permanent increase in university operating grants to make post-secondary education more affordable in the province. At the New Brunswick Student Alliance (NBSA), we applaud this recognition that investing in post-secondary education is building on the success of New Brunswick.

The average student debt of a recent graduate in New Brunswick in 2015 was approximately \$40,000, significantly higher than the national average of \$28,000. Students desperately need relief from the financial burden of student loans so they can start reinvesting in our province, whether it's supporting local businesses, purchasing a home, staying in the province for work or starting a family.

The New Brunswick Labour Force and Skills Development Strategy emphasized the importance of retaining highly skilled and educated individuals. Statistics Canada affirms that high debt loads increase the chances that recent graduates will relocate to more prosperous regions or provinces and reduces the likelihood of savings and homeownership, consequently negatively impacting the economy.

The NBSA met with the provincial government during our 2021 advocacy week and brought forward policy asks which included elimination of interest on student loans, increasing the operating grant and giving international students access to student loans. We are grateful that two of our asks were granted and there was also money invested in helping international students adjust once they enter the province.

Our organization's chair, Charlie Burke, put it this way: “Students are happy to see that New Brunswick has joined the rest of the Atlantic provinces in eliminating the interest on the provincial portion of student loans. For the past few years, the NBSA has been diligently advocating to the government to eliminate the interest to make post-secondary education in New Brunswick more affordable as well as encourage retention in New Brunswick.”

Funding provided to universities in New Brunswick has always been a topic of conversation for student advocacy, since the amount of funding universities receive from the government is directly correlated to university fees for students. Inadequate funding from the government often results in an increase in tuition and university fees, which places a financial burden on students and serves as an obstacle to the accessibility and affordability of post-secondary education in the province.

According to Wasiimah Joomun, NBSA's outgoing executive director, “A permanent increase in the operating grants for universities is definitely a step forward to show students that the government is investing in the future: post-secondary education. We hope that these are just the first steps towards building a more affordable and accessible education for the future of the province.”

The NBSA will continue to actively work with the government and stakeholders to ensure New Brunswick provides a post-secondary education system where any student can attain an accessible, affordable and high-quality education. As the province is looking at population growth, investing in post-secondary education is investing in the future of New Brunswick.

Sydona Chandon
is the executive director of the New Brunswick Students Association.

Game show debate moved fast and light

SABRINA MADDEAUX
POSTMEDIA COLUMNIST

Many were prepared for the first official Conservative leadership debate to resemble a WWE Smackdown. Last week's unofficial edition quickly descended into a cacophony of snide remarks and name-calling – and that was without the inclusion of Patrick Brown, who's been warring with Pierre Poilievre on Twitter.

But Wednesday's debate turned out to be something else altogether. In their quest to help the candidates avoid wanton verbal violence, the organizers and moderator Tom Clark turned the occasion into something of a game show. There were props! There were lightning rounds! There was a sad trombone “womp womp womp” sound that Clark played whenever a candidate broke the rules.

The result was a feverishly fast-paced format that prevented candidates from speaking more than two or three lines at a time. While the debate didn't bog down in unproductive drama, it also failed to allow candidates adequate time to explain and defend their positions. There was no time for nuance and several big statements flew by unexamined.

Poillievre delivered the first major, and some would say shocking, new promise. If elected prime minister, he would fire Tiff Macklem from his role as governor of the Bank of Canada, alleging “he's allowed himself to become the ATM machine of this government.” I wish I could share more about this

pledge to remove the head of one of Canada's most powerful institutions, but it was never followed up on by the moderator or other candidates.

A short time later, Brown stood out as the only candidate who'd advocate for and enforce a no-fly zone over Ukraine. This is a position that deviates from that of practically every other leader of the Western world and would carry potentially severe ramifications for global and national security. But, again, the debate quickly moved on.

The night took an unorthodox turn when Clark began to grill the candidates on what they're reading and bingeing on TV, as well as their favourite music. While seemingly superficial, let's not forget an infamously bad answer to that first question more or less ended Sarah Palin's political career.

Jean Charest couldn't remember the title of the book he's reading right now, but knows it's “about Russia.” Brown professed a love for John Grisham and is upset he's currently too busy to watch the final season of Ozark. Leslyn Lewis binged Bridgerton in French to brush up on her language skills, and Roman Baber is an Amy Winehouse fan.

Poillievre, ever quick on his feet, either fine-tuned his answers for the audience or is, in fact, a walking caricature of himself. What's he reading? Jordan Peterson's 12 Rules for Life. Watching? A Trotsky documentary on Netflix about the “evils of communism.” Listening to? Albertan country singer Paul Brandt. The crowd ate out of Poillievre's hand. So much so, he was



Conservative leadership candidates Leslyn Lewis, Roman Baber, Jean Charest, Scott Aitchison, Patrick Brown and Pierre Poillievre, take part in the Conservative Party of Canada English leadership debate on Wednesday, May 11, in Edmonton. PHOTO: GREG SOUTHAM/POSTMEDIA

docked 10 seconds of talking-time when his supporters booed Charest for alleging his abortion position remains unclear.

As the frontrunner, this was Poillievre's debate to lose, which he certainly didn't do. However, I wouldn't say he won, either. The strict format undermined his signature attack dog style, which, for better or worse, prevented any standout moments.

The real fight was for the position of Poillievre's main adversary. Until now, many assumed it was Charest. However, after this evening, I'm not sure that's still true. Charest seems out of touch with today's Conservative party and unable to find a tone and message that clicks. He's calm when he should be angry, and angry when it'd make more sense to strike a neutral tone.

Rather, it was Brown and Scott Aitchison who presented the most compelling alternatives to Poillievre. Brown made a strong argument about his appeal to urban voters, was convincingly pro-choice and presented a rare Conservative climate measure that isn't mumbo jumbo, arguing for climate tariffs on goods from China and India. Aitchison was the calm,

measured unifier Charest thinks he is, without giving the impression of pandering that Erin O'Toole so often did, and was perfectly competent on every issue. However, he'll need to progress beyond playing party peacemaker if he wants to win this thing. He'll also need to learn French.

As for Lewis and Baber, they likely won't be serious threats in the race, but for different reasons. Beyond Lewis being too socially conservative to be palatable to most general voters, she failed to present as confident and compelling, often stuttering on her answers. Baber came across as intelligent, compassionate and principled, but simply doesn't have the name recognition. This won't be his time, but he's one to watch in the future.

This was a debate that raised more questions than it provided answers, both when it comes to policy and who will emerge victorious in September. Ultimately, the most memorable thing about it will be the sight of candidates being humiliated into submission by the sound of a sad trombone.

Sabrina Maddeaux
is a Postmedia columnist.

commentary

Performing arts



Atlantic Ballet Atlantique Canada launched a series of outdoor performances titled Ballet by the Ocean during the pandemic. David Campbell argues the risks and process involved with setting up the ballet reflect more traditional entrepreneurial ventures. PHOTO: SUBMITTED/ATLANTIC BALLET ATLANTIQUE CANADA

Atlantic Ballet of Canada is an entrepreneurial success



David Campbell Age of opportunity

Coming from me, you might find it strange, but one of the questions I grapple with is how to properly define entrepreneurship. After nearly three decades of study, while I can't give you a precise definition, I know it when I see it.

And Susan Chalmers-Gauvin, CEO of Atlantic Ballet Atlantique Canada, is the textbook definition of a successful entrepreneur.

If we were to define the attributes of a successful entrepreneur, what would be included?

First, entrepreneurs tend to have new and, in many cases, seemingly crazy ideas.

Second, once they have an idea stuck in their head, they pursue it relentlessly.

Third, successful entrepreneurs know how to raise capital. Regardless of how outlandish the idea is, they have that special ability to convince investors of the righteousness of their cause. If the first 10 pitches end in rejection, they keep knocking on doors.

Fourth, successful entrepreneurs can attract the talent needed to turn the crazy idea into an actual business.

Finally, they stick with the business idea doggedly through thick and thin until it finally achieves greatness.

When we talk about successful entrepreneurship in New Brunswick, we focus on the usual suspects – men and women who started firms with a good idea and after several years of struggle built something of value. In some cases, they garner the interest of international firms who scoop them up for hundreds of millions of dollars.

We also cite examples of entrepreneurs who took a family business and built it into an empire.

From the Cod Fathers to the Code Fathers (and increasingly Mothers), the primary way to determine the success of an entrepreneur is the value they bring to the business idea manifested in financial terms. Most of the time, very successful entrepreneurs will also generate substantial economic value and much of that ends up flowing back into their own pockets.

So how come I am making the case that the founder of a not-for-profit ballet company is the textbook definition of a successful entrepreneur?

Here are the facts.

Susan had a good idea that almost everyone initially said wouldn't work. You can't build a professional ballet

company in a backwater. She was told it was a waste of time.

She had no money and, as a not-for-profit, the traditional sources of startup funding were nowhere to be seen.

Even for those who thought she had an interesting entrepreneurial idea, the talent needed to pull it off wasn't in New Brunswick. In fact, for the most part, it wasn't even in Canada.

What does an entrepreneur do with a potentially good idea but no support, no money, no subject-matter expertise and no talent to move it forward?

The really good ones go ahead with the idea anyway.

May 11 was the 20th anniversary of the very first production of the Atlantic Ballet. The story of the 20-year history of the company is a story of the performing arts sector in New Brunswick but it is also a story of successful entrepreneurship.

If we were to define the attributes of a successful entrepreneur, what would be included?

The first thing Susan did was find Igor Dobrovolskiy, a Ukrainian up-and-comer and convinced him to come to the backwater to be the co-founder and artistic director of the new dance company.

Then she went out and found private sector investors: folks that were interested in using their talent, influence and net worth to move New Brunswick forward not just economically but also culturally. The idea of professional ballet company based in Moncton was just tenacious enough to get their interest. They didn't want a "return" on their investment in the financial sense. They wanted to help Susan and Igor prove they could build a world-class dance company in the backwater.

Then she got the public sector interested. This was also a hard sell but, after all, federal, provincial and local governments across Canada invest more than \$200 million of taxpayer dollars into performing arts every year, so why not flow a little of that money into a fledgling performing arts company in New Brunswick?

Finally, they went out and built the team. Igor held international auditions and brought in highly talented professional dancers from Australia, France, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Canada – all of whom moved to Moncton to work with Igor and be part of the new company.

And the rest is history. Like most entrepreneurial stories,

the road to the 20-year mark has featured rough patches. There were multiple times when the company was seemingly at death's door, but Susan doggedly and successfully implored her investors to stick with her and Igor.

She had to pivot the business plan on multiple occasions. They build an export-focused model and then moved into social impact, focusing the lens within the province to expand New Brunswickers' interest and appreciation of the performing arts. The company deliberately expanded the audience by performing in schools, on the street and (check YouTube if you don't believe me) at the Hopewell Rocks.

Of course, the most significant pivot of all came from the COVID-19 pandemic. When almost all other performing arts companies in Canada hunkered down, the ever-restless Susan rolled up her sleeves. Atlantic Ballet created an innovative outdoor performance series called "Ballet by the Ocean," allowing a few moments of joy during a troubled time that has now become a tourism pillar for the company. They also expanded into the online realm and innovative tech tools to support the performing arts sector across the country.

I have to admit I don't really understand the core motivation of not-for-profit entrepreneurs. Many work as hard as their counterparts in the private sector. They take on significant financial and personal risks. Almost always, they face the same sleepless nights.

But the payoff from the ultimate success is not tens of millions of dollars. The payoff is only the satisfaction of building something of value that goes beyond financial remuneration.

If you scroll through the dozens of successful entrepreneurs and leaders who have been inducted into the Junior Achievement New Brunswick Business Hall of Fame, you won't find the name Susan Chalmers-Gauvin.

I think this is an oversight.

If you consider the sleepless nights, the many urgent calls to investors, the business plan pivots and the tenacity in the face of near collapse, the case is a strong one.

Then, if you actually look at the results, the case is sealed.

According to Statistics Canada's Business Counts, as of June 2021, there are only seven cities in Canada with a professional dance company that have as many employees as the Atlantic Ballet: Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Sault Ste. Marie and Moncton.

Backwater, indeed.

Congratulations to Susan, Igor and the rest of the team on the 20th anniversary of the Atlantic Ballet Atlantique Canada.

David Campbell

is an economic development consultant and columnist based in Moncton. He is a past board member of the Atlantic Ballet Atlantique Canada.

Rising prices

From inflating tires to inflating costs



Marshall Button On the button

Three weeks ago I observed a spring-time rite of passage. I drove my car down to the dealer to have the winter tires replaced with the summer ones that had been cluttering my backyard baby barn for six months.

In New Brunswick, picking the best date to do the tire swap is a crapshoot. Too early, you risk the danger of driving through snow with summer tires. Too late, you risk driving around in the summer heat like a loser, clunking around city streets sounding like an Albert County clog-dance competition.

I won't name the automobile dealer here, suffice to say their service department's slogan could be, "There's a sucker born every minute." You know the routine.

"It's a ninety-nine bucks to change the tires. Would you like us to add nitrogen to them for an additional thirty?"

"Uh, okay, sounds like that's something I need."

"We can check the alignment for only \$60 more, but if anything's out of line, would you like us to go ahead and fix it?"

"How much will that cost?"

"Depends on what we find..."

"... Sure, okay."

"Now I notice you're close to 90,000 clicks, so we'd recommend changing the spark plugs, flushing the coolant and doing our overall rigmarole service."

"Well, I suppose we'd better go with all that, too."

Et voila, mesdames et messieurs. That's how you end up paying \$364.56 to get your tires changed!

My vehicle has one of those newfangled computerized systems where a large screen relays information about your fuel economy, your average speed and thanks to a satellite connection somewhere out in space, you always know exactly where you are. I haven't figured out everything it can do, but I'm pretty sure it could track my blood pressure fluctuations, sugar levels and prostate health.

Two days after I paid my exorbitant tire change bill, something called TPMS flashed on the automobile's screen. I'm always wary of any acronym that contains the back-to-back letters PMS, so I checked my owner's manual. Turns out, the annoying flashing was to warn me that my tire pressures were low – "Tire Pressure Monitoring System."

I figured there's no way my tire pressure could be low; my tires are filled with nitrogen! I had to remortgage the house to pay the damned bill. The owner's manual showed me how to recalibrate the system to stop the darn warning light. Of course, two days later the TPMS started flashing again.

This time I thought the tires must actually be low, so I decided to head to the service station to use their air compressor. I was shocked when the machine demanded I pay a loonie before it would turn on. So I walked into the building and said to the attendant, "Hey buddy, I can remember when air was

free. The last time I used one of these it cost twenty-five cents, now it's a dollar. You want me to pay a dollar ... for air!"

Without missing a beat, the young fellow rolled his eyes and muttered, "Inflation."

Predicable jokes aside, that's my longest introduction ever for a newspaper column. My topic is inflation, but not the care tire kind. Inflation has been so out of control over the past few months, we need to see some humour in it because demand is high after a period of low interest.

The Oxford Dictionary defines inflation as "a general increase in prices and fall in the purchasing value of money." You don't have to be a Nobel Prize economist to understand that our purchasing power isn't what it was a year ago. We're coming out of the pandemic. Most of us are anxious about getting out and doing things, but worried about whether we can afford them.

Russia has invaded Ukraine. Most of the rest of the world has reacted by imposing economic sanctions. Russia controls a good chunk of the world's petroleum supply. The world economy is in crisis. As my Newfoundland father used to say, "The arse is out've'er!"

When gas is expensive, farmers spend more to run their tractors and combines. Factories spend more to process food and truckers spend more to deliver the food to our stores. Diesel fuel costs \$2.64 a litre in New Brunswick. Yikes!

I'm thinking of moonlighting as a clown to supplement my income. I could take to the streets selling balloons. I bought a bag of balloons for \$10. How much should I sell them for after I adjust for inflation?

Usually when I try to tell an inflation joke it falls flat.

In our current supply and demand world, we're running out of houses to sell. Home owners who sell are often selling above their asking price. It's tempting to put your home on the market and cash out. But then you'd have to live somewhere else. Most of us could only afford a bouncy castle.

I learned in high school history class about post-First World War Germany. The Weimar Republic thought the best way to combat hyperinflation was to print more money. In 1923, the mark was so worthless it cost more to print a note than the note was worth.

A loaf of bread that cost 250 marks in January 1923 had risen to 200,000 million marks by November. Workers were paid twice per day because prices rose so fast their morning wages were worthless by lunchtime. Germans walked the streets pushing wheelbarrow loads of cash.

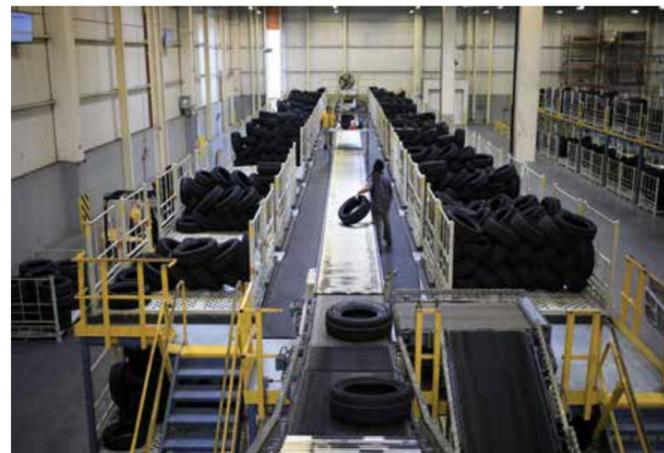
If it ever comes to that here in New Brunswick, I'll probably ditch the cash and keep the wheelbarrow. Last time I checked, New Brunswick soil is still dirt cheap. Except when there's a multi-million-dollar house-with-a-view sitting on it.

*Yes we are the people,
Running in the race,
Buying up the bargains in the old marketplace.*

*Got some Chaleur lobster cookin' in my pot
And I saved a lot of money spending money I don't got.*

Marshall Button

is a native of Dalhousie and the performer/playwright behind "Lucien," a series of one-person plays. A member of the Order of New Brunswick, he writes a biweekly satirical column for Brunswick News.



A recent trip to change his tires left columnist Marshall Button contemplating the effects of inflation. PHOTO: LUKE SHARRETT/BLOOMBERG