

Via Rail appears to be bent on failure

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Just over a year ago, the Maritimes' last remaining passenger train saw its schedule cut by 50 per cent, resulting in plummeting ridership. When Via Rail announced the service cuts it predicted that a tri-weekly train would carry just as many passengers, as customers would simply adjust their plans to the new schedule.

All fall Via Rail has hauled 18-car passenger trains where six or seven cars would suffice. Why? I believe by developing a staggering financial deficit operating the Ocean, it could and would be grounds for cancellation, leaving Atlantic Canada with zero train service.

With nearly one-third of Atlantic Canadians without a driver's licence or being unable to secure or afford insurance and others who wish to not drive anymore, these people become isolated from anywhere in Canada. Many cannot afford to fly nor will that get them to their destination. Frequent service is essential to growing the traffic base in any passenger business, and a tri-weekly operation cannot meet the public need.

It has been estimated that for every dollar spent on a ticket, three or four dollars are generated.

Watch the Via train as it arrives in Moncton and see the large numbers that arrive from Bathurst, Miramichi, Halifax and so forth. A vast number of local passengers within Atlantic Canada use the train.

The true value of the long-distance passenger train lies in the service it provides to the intermediate station stops rather than the end points.

If rail passenger service is cancelled in Atlantic Canada, we will be the only G8 country not moving forward in public transportation. We will be regulated to a second- or third-tier country status.

This is regressive as we travel and see the difference in the rest of North America and the rest of the world.

IAIN DUNLOP
Director Transport Action Atlantic

lic is being viewed as flawed.

In addition to comments by a long-time employee and the CUPE local 865 president who questioned the judgment of the director of therapeutic services, who made the decision to remove the religious symbols, many others have questions about the director's initiative.

What has upset those who strongly oppose the director's independent decision is that the decision was not influenced by a complaint filed with the hospital administration; rather the director felt it was necessary because citizens in the regional do not want the chapel to look like a church.

With that being the main reason for the director making such a radical decision, it is little wonder so many are upset and in many cases wondering what will the director and others with similar authority do next to make religious symbols in public institutions less visible.

Coupled with the understanding that a chapel is a place of worship serving the residence of an institution and that the designer of the hospital allowed space for a chapel, it is elementary that the designer wanted that area to be used as a chapel and not just a sacred room.

Many will continue to be upset with this decision. In other countries where religious symbols, in particular Christians symbols, are removed, their followers are quickly marginalized.

The question, which must be answered now by those in charge of our provincial institutions, is: Will citizens of the province see all religious symbols being placed in an area where they can't be seen by the general public?

TERRY F. WHALEN Sr.
Miramichi

Don't put guns in hands of kids

On Sept. 7 police in Little Rock, Ark., shot and killed a 107-year-old very confused senior gentleman. He was being transferred to a nursing home to which he did not want to go.

He had a gun and thought they were breaking into his house. He fired shots and the police killed him after using gas and other

was another school shooting. A teacher and two students were killed along with many students being injured.

Guess how old the shooter was? Twelve years old – the same age that you can apply for a government-issued hunting licence in this province.

I wrote in this paper at the time that sooner or later a child who is learning to kill animals in the woods will someday kill someone. My letter was attacked by a woman who said "I was furious reading your letter, Terry Parker."

I just hope 12-year-olds with hunting licences can control their anger. Violence begets violence.

TERRY PARKER
Saint John

MLAs should adopt shared risk model

Mr. Perry and the Telegraph-Journal's cartoon depicting retired public services workers as "angry Florida beaches residents" (Nov. 20) was inappropriate! Stand corrected!

It is only but a few that do go south in the winter and most likely not solely on their government pension! We have good reasons to be concerned. As an employee my contribution was to be matched by my employer, 50-50.

We all know that it was not always the case.

Problems with existing funds? There are no talks of cutting public servant nor MLAs' salaries. Why ask retired public service employees to take a cut?

If it is such a needed pension reform, our MLAs should show stronger leadership and be the first ones to adopt and adhere to the "shared-risks model."

Not wait until next spring ... maybe?

PAULINE CORMIER
New Denmark

Cyberbullying bill applauded

Our federal government has tabled a cyberbullying bill that will make it illegal with serious consequences to send intimate and explicit images using telecommunications including

incident of their lives is destructive. A recent study in the United States indicated that 30 per cent of teenagers are sexting, sending nude photos via e-mail or text. It is estimated that one in four teenagers are being intimidated by cyberbullying.

This legislation is significant because it sends the strong message that abusive use of social media is illegal.

Comprehensive information for teenagers by providers, schools and especially parents about the serious dangers and consequences involved by the misuse of social media is as crucial for success as the new laws in preventing cyberbullying. We have an important moral responsibility to protect children.

HAROLD PHALEN
Fredericton

Few clues found in byelections

With all the hoopla and fanfare concerning the four byelections in Quebec and Manitoba, the previously predicted results generally remained static with few exceptions.

Denis Coderre's old riding in Bourassa was held by Emmanuel Dubourg where the Liberal candidate was victorious in a riding that they have preserved since 1997.

Likewise in Toronto Centre, where Chrystia Freeland and NDP candidate Linda McQuaig battled it out, however Ms. Freeland retained the Liberal seat, which was vacated by former Liberal leader Bob Rae. The Liberals are ecstatic over seats they have held since the 90s and the spin amounts to much ado about nothing.

Hardly a victory.

Despite their best efforts and puffery, Justin Trudeau's visit changed nothing, and the best his party can do is hang on to the status quo.

The Southwestern Manitoba riding of Brandon-Souris remains in Tory rule, but by a diminished proportion.

The Tory's with 58 per cent of the vote also retained Provenche riding. A Forum poll previously predicted the Trudeau candidate boasted a 29 percentage point lead in Brandon-Souris but failed to regenerate