



Volume 21, Issue 3

*Where Tomorrow's Public  
Policy Begins Today*

February 9, 2012

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## Part One: Perspectives, Perceptions and Priorities – An Economist’s View on the Aquaculture Industry



Adapted from a keynote address to the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia Sea Farmer’s 2012 Conference, AIMS Director of Research Don McIver shares his optimism on the future of aquaculture in Nova Scotia, from the perspective of a macroeconomist. He addresses the public awareness challenges surrounding the industry, and explains that in Canada – and particularly in Nova Scotia – there is much untapped opportunity for expansion. This is baffling when characterized by the economic circumstances in Nova Scotia.

There is potential for the aquaculture industry in Nova Scotia to not only improve employment and economic growth, and attract and retain immigrants to the province, but to do so in areas where it’s needed most, such as in depopulating rural parts of the province. Improving the public perception of the aquaculture industry, and government support for the environment necessary for the industry to thrive, are the keys to the bright future of aquaculture in this province, according to McIver.

In *Perspectives, Perceptions and Priorities*, McIver emphasizes the need for government agencies to recognize and allow for the exciting possibility of a dramatic industrial shift. Government agencies will have to invent new financing models if they wish to provide support to the aquaculture industry. The funds are available—in the form of largely-wasted subsidies and bailouts of traditional and all-too-often-fruitless industrial support. To tap into this potential, some “new-thinking” is required.

[Click here](#) to read the full commentary.

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## Part Two: Budget Season

This is the time of year when governments start making choices about what should be in the next budget. These choices reflect the entire scope of Government. In *Budget Season*, Bill Black of New Start Nova Scotia offers his thoughts on what are the most important issues that need to be addressed in the budget.

The government will need to look at spending wisely on transportation projects, make some tough choices when it comes to health care and tuition funding, and make cuts to the civil service, which they’ve vowed to trim. Black gives the government credit for staying away from the stadium issue, but calls for smarter choices when it comes to spending on economic development and labour policy.

The most important issues to address, Black says, are Nova Scotia’s ageing population and the economic implications of it, and the need to re-evaluate public sector pensions. We are currently a high tax province which discourages investment and interprovincial immigration. According to Black, however, tax cuts should not be considered until the books are balanced.

[Click here](#) to read the full commentary.

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### Part Three: The Post-Secondary Education Bubble – The Problem with Post Secondary Education; Subsidies, Debt and Income



Amidst a flurry of calls for decreased tuition and more accessible post-secondary education, AIMS Research Intern Andreas Korfmann considers the effects these policies have on value in the education system. While students, parents, unions, and politicians are talking about rising tuition rates and the debt many incur, few have been calling into question the value of post-secondary education.

As tuition fees and government funding have both increased over time, so has the number of Canadians who have been pursuing post-secondary education. This makes it more difficult to assign a value to a post-secondary degree. Though 43% of students in Canada still graduate entirely debt-free, students-with-debt are averaging more debt-per-graduate, while the over-all benefits of post-secondary education in Canada are one of the lowest out of all 32 OECD member countries. Many will likely revert to the current go-to solutions: “fund more universities and colleges” or “lower tuitions through government intervention” Korfmann notes that in fact, these “solutions” may be the problem.

In Korfmann’s view, when it becomes more affordable to go to a post-secondary institution (through government loans and subsidization), it floods the job market with degree holders and brings salaries down while ensuring a greater number of underemployed or unemployed graduates. We’re also watering down the quality of the education itself.

Korfmann believes that with educational benefits slowing, sooner or later we will see a decrease in post-secondary enrolment as the benefits of going to school shrink while the costs rise. In [\*\*\*The Post-Secondary Education Bubble\*\*\*](#), Korfmann warns that if we are not careful, we will end up facing the burst of this higher education bubble and see a trend towards a less-educated society.

[Click here](#) to read the full commentary.



## Part Four: OF INTEREST: The Sky Has Limits – Online Learning in K-12 Public Education in Canada

*AIMS is pleased to republish this report by [The Society for Quality Education](#), prepared by Paul W. Bennett of [Schoolhouse Consulting](#). The report gives a review of virtual education, and ultimately finds that despite the advantages of introducing online and e-learning programs in the public education system, there are barriers to its growth and expansion.*

Though students are becoming more tech-savvy and e-learning offers great potential to find cost savings and both attract and retain students, the report finds that most provincial teacher's unions are slow to support online learning programs. There is often a disconnect between these programs and labour contract agreements, limiting online learning to a supplemental tool in the classroom.

Despite Canada's initial advantage, [The Sky Has Limits](#) finds that the United States has surpassed us in their rate of growth for online learning over the past two years. With the exception of British Columbia, online and virtual learning is very slow-to-start in Canada's K-12 public schools. Private execution of e-learning, on the other hand, is growing quickly.

[Click here](#) to read the full report.

The Society for Quality Education is dedicated to the significant improvement of student learning in Canada. [www.SocietyForQualityEducation.org](http://www.SocietyForQualityEducation.org)

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## Part Five: The Way We'll Get By

Perry Newman, President of Atlantica Group LLC, inspired by a video of Maine residents greeting the troops as they come home from their missions, notes that Maine's population is aging, and nearly everyone is facing more economic challenges than usual. The national economy has slowed, and federal and state tax revenues are falling short of providing the services people rely on.

Newman also notes that charitable giving has decreased in the state. In its 2011 update, the Maine Philanthropy Center noted that total individual charitable giving in Maine declined markedly in 2008 as the economy began its precipitous decline from 2007 levels. Moreover, fewer Mainers claimed charitable tax deductions on their income tax returns.

In [The Way We'll Get By](#), Newman suggests that during these tough times, people have to be independently giving and compassionate – private, people-powered strategies that were in place long before the time of 'social safety nets'. What will pull Mainers through these times are the same values and priorities that bring the troop greeters back to the Bangor International Airport, day after day, night after night, come hell or high water.

[Click here](#) to read the full commentary.

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## Part Seven: AIMS in the Media

[Census 2011 makes history: population in the West surpasses that in the East](#) – For the first time, the population in Western Canada has surpassed that in Eastern Canada. Don McIver comments on the trends in Atlantic Canada and warns against regional development efforts.

[Realtor, hotelier among N.S. businesses facing fast-rising assessments](#) – As property assessment appeals are being reviewed in Nova Scotia, AIMS President and CEO Charles Cirtwill says an increased property assessment does not have to result in a higher tax bill.

**Canada's census shows people moving west** – AIMS Director of Research Don McIver comments on the trends in the Canadian census and what the findings mean for Atlantic Canada.

**JobFile: Minimum Wage increase** – AIMS Research Intern Andreas Korfmann's paper on minimum wage increases is featured in OpenFile Halifax's JobFile.

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