



Volume 19, Issue 1

*Where Tomorrow's Public  
Policy Begins Today*

May 12, 2011

**How can you support AIMS?**

*Like AIMS on Facebook*



*Follow AIMS on Twitter*

***Don't forget to comment on our blogs ...***

*Having trouble reading this email? View our online version at:  
[www.aims.ca/library/beacon012005.pdf](http://www.aims.ca/library/beacon012005.pdf)*

- **Part One: We're number...34!**
- **Part Two: AIMS blog – Thank you sir, but I don't need your seat**
- **Part Three: Mission Accomplished**
- **Part Four: Commuter Cut**
- **Part Five: AIMS blog – Michael Zwaagstra's ten-part series on education**
- **Part Six: AIMS in the Media**



## Part One: We're number...34!

In this commentary, [Bislimi Group Foundation](#) founder and president Tony Bisimli explains how the education establishments in Canadian provinces embellish international results in order to pat themselves on the back. This has serious repercussions for Canadian students, as well as parents, teachers and society as a whole.

An excellent example of a high quality international testing program is the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA). According to the latest PISA results, Canada's education system ranks highly. However, Canada does not deliver education, the provinces do. If you look past the false bluster and consider the actual results on international tests, the differences between provincial scores become all too obvious. Unfortunately for Atlantic Canada, sometimes the truth hurts.

The public was presented with a different story when provincial 'educrats' told a much brighter picture of Atlantic Canada's poor scores by comparing them to the results of other countries and focusing on the advantages of the provinces with higher scores, if they acknowledged the results of the other provinces at all.

In [We're number...34!](#), Bislimi asks, does the spin put on the results matter? If it deflects criticism of the education system so it can focus on doing its job, is it really a bad thing? Bislimi answers yes and yes. Further analysis done by the OECD shows that being genuine and honest and most importantly *open* about the results indeed makes a difference. Transparency is necessary if we want to address the decreasing trend downward in Canada's overall scores and improve our public education systems.

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

---

## Part Two: AIMS blog – Thank you sir, but I don't need your seat

In this post on AIMS blog *Straight Talk!*, AIMS Communications Officer [Paige T. MacPherson](#) confronts the notion that "equal opportunity" hiring policies are necessary to incorporate women into Canadian politics.

After Canada's 41<sup>st</sup> federal election, women's rights advocates saw the 25% of seats in the House of Commons filled by women as significant, but many stressed that we need at least 50%. To achieve this goal, several political parties have implemented "equal opportunity" affirmative action hiring policies to ensure women can run for office.

Explaining that early feminism was about equality of all persons under the law, MacPherson suggests that the modern 'women's rights movement' has moved away from that. The idea that women need institutional barriers to keep men down in order for them to succeed is insulting, and facilitates the opposite of equality in our system.

Equality under the law is the only equality we'll ever truly get, and equal rights under the law in harmony with individual freedoms is the only way to foster the strength in women that will allow them to move up in careers such as politics. In the meantime, let's celebrate the women in our society who have succeeded on their own merit. We are all people, and we are all equally capable of getting the job done – that is the crux of the original women's rights movement in Canada.

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

---

### Part Three: Mission Accomplished

In this commentary, AIMS Board Chair John Risley writes that those contributing to the public policy debate on climate change need exercise to more transparency and more research into all possible sources. Risley addresses the fact that climate change is an extremely controversial topic, and because of the political correctness surrounding it, policymakers are depriving themselves of necessary research.

We do not know the extent to which man is responsible for climate change, and we have yet to do adequate research on the extent to which natural solar cycles may be over-riding man's impact. Another under-researched area is the extent to which various activities contribute to, or generate, emissions.

In ***Mission Accomplished***, Risley makes the point that more transparency is needed when it comes to research on climate change, so we can have a better understanding of where we need to focus remediation efforts and the billions of dollars we are preparing to spend.

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

.....



## Part Four: Commuter Cut

*Part of a series written by Bill Black of [New Start Nova Scotia](#)*

In this commentary, Bill Black of [New Start Nova Scotia](#) addresses the difficulty of commuting into Halifax from outside of the city. It takes too long to get to the urban core of Halifax from outside the peninsula. Many commuters report travel times of forty-five minutes to as much as an hour and a half, much too high for a city of less than 400,000 people.

Black suggests there is a great opportunity to better use our south end port lands and the rail cut that accesses them. The rail cut from downtown to Bayers Road can be converted to vehicular use, plus adjacent space for active transportation. Commuters using this route could expect substantial savings in travel time and the existing routes would be less congested. Greenhouse gas emissions would be correspondingly reduced. This would substantially reduce travel times for people coming into the downtown area for work, study, entertainment, or health care. It can dramatically improve Halifax's attractiveness as a place to live or visit.

In [Commuter Cut](#), Black lays out the proposal for eased commutes and writes that Government should immediately commission a proper evaluation. In the meantime, he urges Haligonians to please join the conversation.

Join the conversation by visiting [www.newstartns.ca](http://www.newstartns.ca) or the [AIMS Facebook page](#).

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

### OF INTEREST – COMMUTER CUT EVENT

#### *Part of Bill Black's Halifax Club Speaker Series*

It takes too long to get to the urban core of Halifax from outside the peninsula. Many commuters report travel times of forty-five minutes to as much as an hour and a half, much too high for a city of less than 400,000 people.

Join Bill Black on May 18th as he discusses the great opportunity to better use our south end port lands and the rail cut that accesses them.

Wednesday, May 18th  
12:00pm - 1:30pm  
Dress: Business Casual  
Adult price: \$24.95

[Click here](#) for more information or reservations or contact Stacie at 902-423-8460 ext. 3



## Part Five: AIMS blog – Michael Zwaagstra’s ten-part series on education

Michael Zwaagstra, author of *What’s Wrong With Our Schools...and how we can fix them (2010)* is featured in a ten-part series on education on AIMS blog *Straight Talk!* On April 1st, AIMS hosted Michael Zwaagstra to speak at a [public forum on education](#) in Halifax. This ten-part series on education features excerpts from Zwaagstra’s book and explains how he believes we can fix our public education systems in Canada.

### **Read part one: *What’s Wrong With Our Schools? – Whatever happened to common sense in education?***

In this post, Zwaagstra argues that three primary factors contribute to the problems with our education system: the lack of content in some school curricula, the anti-testing ideology promoted by many educators, and the no-fail policies that have been enacted by some school boards.

### **Read part two: *What’s Wrong With Our Schools? – Tests are good for kids***

In this post, Zwaagstra writes that there needs to be a systematic and fair way of assessing students, and this has to take place as both the knowledge and skills of students develop.

### **Read part three: *What’s Wrong With Our Schools? - Some schools are better than others***

In this post, Zwaagstra makes the point that the most successful schools have the most decentralized management. In contrast, school districts that permit little autonomy for principals and allow little parental choice are less likely to improve their students’ academic achievement.

Follow AIMS blog *Straight Talk!* for more pieces from this series as they are posted.

[Click here](#) to read the posts on AIMS blog *Straight Talk!*

---

## Part Six: AIMS in the Media

**[Trim school boards, not schools – critic](#)** – AIMS President and CEO Charles Cirtwill says Nova Scotia’s eight-school board system is unnecessary or at least in need of serious trimming.

**[Business group pleased with Harper win](#)** – AIMS Director of Research Don McIver said the return to stability that comes with a majority government is good news for business in Atlantic Canada.

Permission is given to reproduce material from this newsletter or from the AIMS website, as long as both AIMS and the author, where appropriate, are given proper credit. Please notify us when using our material.

Some of the materials in this newsletter will require Adobe® Reader® to access. If you do not have Adobe® Reader® installed on your computer, [click here](#) to download the full program.

If you have received this message in error, please accept our apologies. To unsubscribe from the Beacon, please visit [www.AIMS.ca](http://www.AIMS.ca) and follow the links at the right hand corner of the homepage. Follow the links to subscribe to the newsletter and there is an option to unsubscribe. To subscribe, follow the same instructions but use the subscribe option.

We welcome your comments at [communications@aims.ca](mailto:communications@aims.ca).

[Privacy Policy](#)