



# THE BEACON



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*Where Tomorrow's Public  
Policy Begins Today*

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**Part One: How Atlantic Canada can sell to the west instead of moving there; AIMS event provides a behind the scenes look.**

How will the inter-provincial trade deal recently implemented between British Columbia and Alberta impact Atlantic Canada? Can other provinces sign on? What opportunities exist?

The TILMA (Trade Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement) is the hottest Canadian trade related topic since the NAFTA and AIMS is giving you the opportunity to learn all about it from the two key negotiators.

Join Robert Musgrave and Shawn Robbins for a Breakfast Briefing on June 6 at the Marriott Harbourfront in Halifax to find out how Atlantic Canada can get in on the ground floor of this ground breaking agreement.

For more information on the TILMA breakfast, [click here](#).

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## Part Two: Equalization: Ontario is not going to take it anymore.

Why equalization isn't equal at all. This federal programme designed to ensure Canadians across the country received relatively equal services is costing some provinces more than others. At a time when some provinces are demanding more and more, Ontario is saying enough is enough.

AIMS invites you to a Breakfast Briefing with David MacKinnon, policy advisor to the Ontario Chambers of Commerce. A native of PEI and a Dal grad, MacKinnon has looked at this most Canadian of all Canadian programme from both sides.

Join MacKinnon at the Halifax Club on June 13<sup>th</sup> for insider analysis on Why Ontario isn't going to take it anymore.

For more information on this Breakfast Briefing with David MacKinnon, [click here](#).

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## Part Three: Grade inflation: Setting kids up to fail?

Why are high school students in New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador failing provincial math exams but passing their math classes? AIMS latest study looks at one possible answer to this question and finds a disturbing link between high grade inflation and low provincial exam scores.

AIMS Director of Education Policy, Robert Laurie, examines the relationship between teacher assigned marks and provincial examination results in the education Commentary, ***Setting them up to fail? Excellent school marks don't necessarily lead to excellent exam marks.*** He shows that significant grade inflation is present in New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador high schools and is all too often accompanied by lower than average results on provincial math examinations.

In a front page article in the Times & Transcript, Laurie explained that such grade inflation hurts students, "If I'm a student and I'm going to the exam with a good average, I assume I know what I should. If I end up doing my best on the exam, but it is not good enough to pass or just barely, there is a lot questioning that goes on... You can extrapolate that. Kids will get to university in full confidence that they are ready but may end-up hitting a wall and bomb out drastically."

"It is time for the education establishment to set the record straight," said AIMS acting president Charles Cirtwill. "The unfortunate relationship between high grade inflation and low exam marks is too strong to ignore. Are teachers overcompensating for poor preparation and poor performance on provincial exams? Or are expectations so low that kids are not being prepared to meet a fair, reasonable and objective assessment?"

To read *Setting them up to fail*, [click here](#).

[Click here](#) to read the article in the Times & Transcript.

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## Part Four: AIMS labour shortage numbers prophetic.

Charles Cirtwill, AIMS acting president, had the perfect answer when asked by the National Post to explain why a seafood plant in Prince Edward Island had to bring immigrants in from Russia to fill vacant jobs; the labour shortage.

In this article from the Post, Cirtwill notes that AIMS has been predicting and informing the

public about the pending deficit for about a decade. He points out that while the island's unemployment rate of over 10% might suggest that there should be no problem finding local workers there are other factors keeping Maritimers off the shop floor.

"We've got a structure between EI and welfare that makes it very difficult for people to move to accept these kinds of jobs, because of course it doesn't pay to do so. They actually lose money if they take employment."

To read the complete article, [click here](#).

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#### **Part Five: Father of Quebec health care says things have got to change.**

"The future of our health care system is a fundamental issue. If the necessary changes are not made, our system cannot survive. That is a certainty from which we cannot escape."

So says Claude Castonguay in this Commentary from the Canadian Health Care Consensus Group in which he explains the reforms needed in the Quebec health care system.

In *Health Care: Towards significant changes*, Castonguay sets out a step by step process to reform health care in Quebec beginning with the fundamentals, the very governance of the Canadian health care system, which he says must change. He said the most significant change is the separation of the roles of the purchasers and the providers of health care services.

Castonguay concludes with seven proposals, which he says would "allow us to save our health care system and its essential universal character."

To read more, [click here](#).

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#### **Part Six: Explaining Atlantica: Understanding the concept, seeing the opportunity.**

In his fortnightly column for the Chronicle Herald, AIMS acting president Charles Cirtwill pointed out Atlantica's benefits to the region and received a ringing endorsement from the newspaper's small business columnist.

Cirtwill explains what Atlantica is and is not, while highlighting concrete examples of how the Atlantic Provinces already benefit as well as what they could gain in the future. He writes:

"Geographic, economic and social reality, not to mention simple self-interest, has always drawn us back into the Atlantica fold, whatever label was placed on it at the time. Consider whom we send a Christmas tree to every year. Or consider more modern examples like the Maritime Beer Accord and the investment in ferry facilities to link Nova Scotia to Maine, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick."

In response, columnist Karen Blotnicky praises AIMS for its work on Atlantica and points out that Cirtwill has hit the nail right on the head in his column. She elaborates;

"Cirtwill astutely pointed out that Atlantica is not a trade agreement or a political union; rather, it is a region that has some amazing possibilities for growth."

She goes on to explain that the small businesses of the Atlantic Provinces would be the ones to benefit most from Atlantica.

[Click here](#) to read Charles Cirtwill's complete column.  
To read Karen Blotnicky's column, [click here](#).

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**Part Seven: The road to self-sufficiency can't be paved with hand-outs from Ottawa: AIMS on task force report.**

AIMS acting president Charles Cirtwill was invited by journalists from across the region to provide insightful analysis on the New Brunswick Task Force on Self-Sufficiency's final report and recommendations for the province. Cirtwill noted that the recommendations were just that; suggestions, thankfully. He added;

"The Graham government needs to stand up and say, 'Great, now we need to decide which are appropriate for New Brunswick and which aren't because that's what we were elected to do. I don't think they should be bullied into endorsing it wholly or rejecting it entirely.'"

Cirtwill's analysis was used extensively to inform New Brunswickers of some of the pitfalls in the report. In this front page article from the Times and Transcript he explains in no uncertain terms why New Brunswick will not reach self-sufficiency if their idea is to have the road there paved with other people's money. Cirtwill points out that if the province were serious about paying its own way then the government would ask Ottawa for debt relief rather than increased funding.

To read the complete article, [click here](#).

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