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Policy Begins Today*

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Part One: Put up or shut up: AIMS releases an Interim Municipal Report Card for New Brunswick.

As the saying goes, it's time to put up or shut up. Everyone loves to complain about the municipal services they receive and the taxes they pay. Invariably they pay more and get less than the next guy, and they know this based on what the next guy told them, or what they figure the next guy would tell them if they asked him.

AIMS has a better idea. We invite New Brunswickers to help us decide whether taxes in Dieppe are really higher than in Caraquet, Saint John, or Plaster Rock. This is a chance to actually help measure how well roads, sewers, and garbage collection are managed in your town.

The AIMS [Interim Municipal Report Card for New Brunswick](#) does not give ranks and grades for all 102 municipalities in the province. However, it gives all New Brunswickers one-stop access to a range of information about where they live and about how the "other half lives".

The "interim" label means that this is the latest step on the road to the final Municipal Report Card to be issued later in 2008. The Institute also plans to release an Interim Municipal Report Card for Nova Scotia next month.

This "interim" Report Card, called *Having Your Say* invites public feedback on how the data should be combined to grade municipal performance overall. As AIMS Executive Vice President Charles Cirtwill puts it, "if you think there is something more important to count when judging municipalities, by all means, let us know."

"However, we require three conditions to be met first: the information has to be relevant to all municipalities, not just yours; it has to be quantifiable, no guesses allowed; and it has to exist – a measure that would be nice to have, until it actually is collected is just that, nice to have."

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



Part Two: Not Greener: AIMS partners with MPPI on analysis of proposed universal health care for Maryland.

There are any number of adages that could be applied to the oft compared Canadian and US health care systems, but two come quickly to mind after reading this analysis - "Be careful what you wish for" and "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence".

Single-Payer Health Care for Maryland: Two Analyses responds to a bill proposed by State Delegate Karen S. Montgomery (D-Montgomery) in the recently ended session of the Maryland General Assembly. The paper evaluates Montgomery's proposal and addresses the flaws in a statewide universal health care system including the high cost to the state budget that would inevitably lead to rationing of services by government officials. *Single-Payer* also issues strong warnings to Maryland from Canadians living under a single-payer system.

The Atlantic Institute for Market Studies (AIMS) and the Maryland Public Policy Institute of Rockville, Maryland partnered in this joint evaluation of the proposal for a universal health care system in Maryland, providing both a Canadian and American prospective.

"Despite some Americans' misconceptions, Canada's health care system is not the envy of the world," said Ian Munro, Director of Research at AIMS and one of the study's authors. "Canada's single-payer system fuses the functions of universal insurer, provider, and evaluator of health care. The results are waiting lists, inaccessible drugs and services, and burgeoning medical tourism as people flee Canada to get services in the U.S. and elsewhere. Marylanders who hold up the Canadian health care system as the answer to their problems should be very careful in what they wish for."

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



Part Three: Not Guilty: Trade Agreements are not the culprit.

Free trade and the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has moved to the centre of the US presidential primaries with both remaining Democrat candidates blaming it for all the economic woes of the country.

In this Commentary, *International Trade and the US Presidential Elections*, AIMS President Brian Lee Crowley sheds a more informed light on the topic. He strips away the rhetoric and shows that trade agreements are not the culprit they are made out to be. Crowley writes:

" [E]ven if you thought that "trade" was the cause of America's domestic economic weakness, it is by and large not the trading partners with whom America has trade agreements like NAFTA who are the "culprits". China, whose trade surplus with the US is growing apace, has no trade agreement to threaten to rip up. What it does have is an exchange rate kept artificially low by a sustained effort to keep their currency pegged to the US dollar. China and other East Asian currencies that have a similar currency management regime have seen the value of their currency rise only about 12.5% since 2002 and a mere 5.8% last year, whereas a broad cross-section of currencies, inflation adjusted and trade-weighted, has gained 28% against the dollar since 2002, and nearly 7% last year. The US trade balance has improved significantly with the latter group (including Canada), but continues to decline with the former."

To read the complete Commentary, *International Trade & the US President elections*, [click here](#).

Part Four: Over-governed: Keeping the civil service in check makes fiscal sense.

When there was a suggestion in New Brunswick to cut the number of civil servants in the province, reporters turned to AIMS for insight.

Director of Research, Ian Munro, explained that an abundance of civil servants not only hampers the private sector in its recruitment efforts, but also contributes to higher deficits. He said that is especially problematic in have-not provinces such as New Brunswick.

AIMS research has shown repeatedly that equalization receiving provinces in Canada have more per capita civil servants and spend more per capita on public services than equalization paying provinces.

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

To read a sample of AIMS research on the cost of public services, follow the links below:

- [The brick on the scale: How equalization weighs heavily on us all.](#)
- [The Flypaper Effect: Does equalization really contribute to better public](#)

services, or does it just “stick to” politicians and civil servants?

➤ *Is the federation rebalanced? Not even close.*

Part Five: Paying kids to learn: Toronto Sun asks AIMS Fellow in Public Education Reform to weigh in.

A review of the 50 worst schools in Toronto found that all are in five of the neediest areas of the city. The Toronto Sun sought public educators from around the region and the country to examine solutions.

Angus McBeath, AIMS Fellow in Public Education Reform, was among those contacted. He reviewed how school boards throughout North America improved student performance, and made it clear one solution does not fit all.

He said one of the reasons school boards fail when they try to improve student success is because they aren't focused.

"I noticed the other day ... the Toronto District School Board was fooling around with the idea of no homework for young kids, and that becomes then the preoccupation," he said. "Add 100 preoccupations and what you don't have is a laser-like focus on improving student achievement."

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

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