



# Let's get started

**T**here is so much I would love to deliberate over, from the continuing political failure in Washington to the escalating crisis in Europe, but I have delayed long enough the promised second idea for rural economic development. In some ways, recent troubles in the pulp and paper business and the impact on communities throughout the region make such ideas even timelier.

My first suggestion was to encourage a small community in the region to take on the goal of becoming the world's greenest small town or village. My next suggested idea is to encourage another such community to focus on becoming the world's healthiest place to live.

Consider this: we all know health care costs are raging out of control with worse to come absent new ways of tackling the responsibility. We know child obesity and diabetes are huge issues with that need to be dealt with. We know, and indeed want, a more preventative approach rather than spending 99.9 per cent of our health care budgets on treatment and cures. And we know there isn't a single politician in the country with the courage to actually confront these challenges. So this is up to us.

Again, what I am advocating is for an Atlantic Canadian community (or communities) to decide it really wants to take on the twin tasks of reversing the rural population decline and come up with an inspired economic development initiative. This will obviously take local leadership but — most importantly — local participation and commitment. In both cases such goals come with an extensive measuring process, accompanied by a robust education program. Arguments for both are resident in the belief that the more individuals are aware of their health condition and that of their family members, the more likely they are to be engaged in doing what they can to remedy, preserve and protect them.

The P to 12 education curriculum in the community would be amended to include a mandatory physical education component and extensive counselling on nutrition and the relationship between nutrition, exercise and disease. It is absolutely critical that young people get this message during a time when they are forming values which will guide their future lifestyles.

The science of genomics has progressed to the point where every individual can have their own genome profile for less than \$5,000. This will soon become \$500. What's

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the value of that? Such mapping will indicate certain preconditions, such as a greater risk of cardiovascular disease. That knowledge can be instrumental in tailoring lifestyle to minimizing such risk. We now know about 40 per cent of all prescription medicine, on which we spend billions and from which many suffer unpleasant side effects, is basically useless beyond a placebo effect. This is because each of us has a genomic profile which is not tolerant of a particular medicine. In other words, having your own genome map would, with certainty, determine whether a particular drug or medicine was going to have the desired remedial impact. Bingo, we save 40 per cent of the costs of prescription medicines.

Local restaurants would specialize in healthy food menus. Robust messaging would explain the costs and consequences of deep-fried foods and too much sodium intake. Nutrition experts from around the world would be invited to help design such local programs. Media would be constantly focused on the latest ideas for living a healthier lifestyle and the progress of the community in moving towards its goals. Pharma companies would embrace the opportunity to measure the effectiveness of their drugs in a community capable of tailoring the treatment to the patient. Governments would be anxious to understand how treatment and curative costs can be reduced through a more proactive commitment to healthy living and thus how much of their budgets might be redirected to such an objective.

Imagine the attraction of the community to those considering where they might raise young families and imagine the slew of small business opportunities for entrepreneurs intent on using the community to test an idea whose ultimate market would be global.

The restrictions of this column prevent further elaboration of the concept but you get the idea. Think about it. Let your imagination run with it. Surely we are past the point of believing this must first be attempted somewhere else before we could possibly think of doing it in Atlantic Canada.

I hope so. | ABM

The views expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of Atlantic Business Magazine. Feedback: [dchafe@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com](mailto:dchafe@atlanticbusinessmagazine.com)

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