

# The Daily Gleaner

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By Taylor Gray

## **It is Time to Demand Less**

Although the Canadian economy has recovered from the financial crisis of 2008 and the resultant global economic recession, at least in technical terms, it is difficult to deny that local, national, and international economies remain fragile. Such fragility should not be taken lightly as a turn to the red would quickly make any recent deficit reduction measures (e.g. the two percent budget reductions in the Provincial education districts) not only insufficient but also irrelevant.

Governments at all levels have been active in addressing the simmering economic malaise, yet it seems that nearly all efforts to date have been nothing more than simple stop-gap measures which only serve to temporarily perpetuate the status quo. Providing financial support to a call centre to open 14 new positions is wonderful news for those recent hires and allows government officials to be seen as active in the battle against unemployment, but there is simply no way we can allow our local and provincial prosperity to rest on the shoulders of call centres in an age of economic globalization.

Yet, on Tuesday, June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Provincial Finance Minister Blaine Higgs may have taken the first concrete step to long-term economic recovery when he said that New Brunswickers need to demand less.

This simple statement did not launch any new policy platform yet serves to highlight the greatest weakness in our burgeoning economic recovery—we turn to the government for leadership and support when the government is nothing more than a representation of ourselves. Perhaps it is time to skip the middleman and rekindle our senses of personal agency, responsibility, and innovation. From its vantage point, the government is well positioned to act as a steward of our economy but can we really expect it to also serve as the engine of all economic growth?

In order to truly put the recent global economic recession behind us and minimize any residual scarring, we need to avoid re-establishing the previous economic landscape but instead establish a novel approach which will see local and national economies develop to be not only a stable player on the global setting, but a leading force.

At the local, provincial, and national scales, we stand to benefit from our abundance of natural resources, skilled and educated work forces, and relatively efficient public infrastructure—but why wait for government officials to figure out how to make something grow from these ingredients? Innovation and entrepreneurship are not just acts, they are a state of mind which looks to ourselves for solutions to perceived problems and shortcoming rather than to someone else.

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Demanding less of government does not necessarily mean settling for less in our lifestyles, but rather demanding more of ourselves is sustaining such lifestyles, and if that is not possible then it is also up to us to adjust our expectations and demands.

To look to government for growth and prosperity is to put a ceiling on our aspirations. Sustainable prosperity arises from the interaction and integration of economic, social, and environmental spheres—the weakening of even one of these sectors can jeopardize the entire equation.

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