

# Cape Breton Post

## CTF scores pension review coup

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The Canadian Taxpayers Federation has scored a major coup in Nova Scotia just over four months after announcing a "full-time presence in Atlantic Canada."

The "full-time presence" is Kevin Lacey, who was introduced to the public as the CTF's new Atlantic director (read spokesperson) back on Sept. 14, 2010.

A Halifax native, Lacey worked in Prime Minister Stephen Harper's office (2006-08), was an adviser to former Nova Scotia premier John Hamm (2003-06), worked for both the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies and the Fraser Institute, and ran a consulting business "providing advice to leading politicians and corporations."

Lacey is still "providing advice to leading politicians," though they're not paying him for it anymore, it's much more public and it's likely not as welcome.

The coup is the Nova Scotia government's decision to have an independent panel review the pension plan enjoyed by those who've served as a Nova Scotia MLA, with the review expected to be wrapped up in the spring.

Newly minted Speaker of the legislature and Whitney Pier native Gordie Gosse made that announcement on Friday.

"Over the last few weeks, I've been listening to the public and reading the articles in the news (and) I've spoken to all three house leaders today and let them know I've initiated an independent review," said Gosse, who has served as the MLA for Cape Breton Nova since 2003. "There's a trend out there that it should be done."

Gosse didn't draw a straight line between his announcement of the review and the CTF Atlantic office's release of a report - also on Sept. 14, 2010 - that recommended major changes to how Nova Scotia MLA pensions are funded.

But the connection is obvious.

"The MLA pension program is so rich that for every \$1 contributed by a politician the taxpayers contribute \$22 toward their retirement - this amounts to \$11 million a year," Lacey said back in September, adding that figure includes interest.

According to the province's Finance Department, taxpayers actually contribute \$6.79 for every \$1 contributed by MLAs, not including interest.

The CTF, a "federally incorporated, not-for-profit

citizen's group dedicated to lower taxes, less waste and accountable government" founded in Saskatchewan in 1990, has made its presence known to Bluenosers in the last four months.

In addition to strongly recommending pension reform, the CTF has called for the Nova Scotia government to increase its tax brackets with inflation and has come out against the proposed \$159-million convention centre in Halifax.

The CTF's role is "to advocate the common interest of taxpayers." We thought that was the job of the politicians, who appear to be increasingly taking their directions from the CTF.

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