

# north shore news

## Taking stock of 2013's gains and losses

### Last year's top stories no doubt the talk of 2014

[Tom Carney](#) / North Shore News

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Every column has a best before date.

So before the New Year gets any older let's review the stories that piqued our interest in 2013.

- The bottom line

How are seniors doing? When we compare the well-being of our seniors to those in other countries the answer is pretty well. Not perfect, mind you, but our seniors are among the best looked after in the world.

Those who suggest otherwise are promoting their agenda, not yours.

- Pension tension

Pension reform was a bust in 2013. It was all talk and no action. There is no shortage of ideas on how to put more money into the pockets of retirees. The trick is how to do it without compromising the future of our children and grandchildren.

- The truth about the flu shot

The flu won't just make you sick, it can kill you. I think most people are better off getting the flu shot than not. But the flu shot appears to be especially poor at protecting seniors, its efficacy has been overstated and the rollout of the flu shot campaign by the health authority can and should be better.

That's not enough to push me into the antivaccine camp but I'm done promoting the flu shot.

- Let's talk

When I was growing up, we never talked about money, sex, politics or religion. It made for a rather tame conversation around the dinner table.

Fast forward 50 years and the taboo subjects are the right to die with dignity and the mental health of seniors.

We have to begin to talk about these issues. That didn't happen in 2013.

Things are not likely to get better until we do.

- Age rage

Are today's seniors screwing everyone else? There's a lot of talk these days about how our seniors will bankrupt the treasury and doom the younger generation to be destitute.

Don't believe it. We're all in this together.

Those who promote inter-generational warfare do us a disservice.

- Is there a humanist in the house?

The idea of improving patient care by considering the totality of the experience through the eyes of the patient is a fairly new idea. Science and technology are thriving in medicine but those taboo subjects I referenced earlier suggest a little more humanity and empathy are the antidotes needed to mend our health-care system.

- Are we there yet?

Wins for seniors in 2013 include the end of mandatory retirement, the establishment in two provinces of the office of a common market regulator, the release of senior action plans from the B.C. and Ontario governments, new federal legislation to protect seniors against fraud, proactive enrollment for old age security benefits and better labelling for drugs.

- Chicken Little

The sky isn't falling. New research suggests the rate of cognitively impaired people 70 or older is in decline.

Better health care, healthier lifestyles and higher education are credited for the turnaround.

- Older and oh well

I penned my first column in 2006. A reader, by the name of George, was less than impressed.

"I don't know who you are or where you come from," he said, "but one thing I know for sure is that I'm a heck of a lot smarter than you'll ever be."

Which brings me to my point. Older and Wiser, the name of this column, references the reader, not the writer, of the column.

Thanks to all my readers, including George, for their interest, support and suggestions in 2013.

I expect we will be talking more about these issues this year.

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