

Improve Classroom Conditions Council Selected

Melanie Morrissey, Bible Hill Junior High School and Myles Fox, grade 10 student at Cobequid Educational Centre, Truro are two of the nine classroom teachers who will be tasked to improve the teaching and learning environment in Nova Scotia classrooms. A total of fourteen have been selected to form the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions.

The council's first meeting was held in late March. Initial recommendations from the council are expected no later than April 28. In addition to the 9 teachers, the council will include a student, a parent, a guidance counselor, Deputy Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and executive director of NSTU.

"The council is a first for our province," said Karen Casey, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. "It reflects the perspectives of those most involved in the education system - teachers, parents and students. Meaningful change cannot happen without their input and guidance."

Other classroom members of the council are: Sean Barker, Antigonish Education Centre; Mélanie Belliveau, École Acadienne de Pomquet, Antigonish Co.; Cheryl Bourque-Wells, Drumlin

Heights Consolidated School, Argyle, Yarmouth Co.; Elizabeth Brideau-Clark, Bayview Community School, Mahone Bay; Michael Cosgrove, Dartmouth High School; Reagan O'Hara, Avon View High School, Windsor; Kerri Lynn Power, Memorial High School, Sydney Mines and Rachel Ross-Mantley, Central Spryfield Elementary.

Additional council members include: Amy MacKinnon, parent, Shelburne County; Pamela Doyle, guidance counsellor at Lockview High School, Fall River; Joan Ling, executive director of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union and council co-chair and Sandra McKenzie, deputy minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and council co-chair.

The council will have \$20 million over two years to address issues in the classroom that have been identified by teachers. This includes data collection, complex classrooms, class sizes at all grade levels and the student attendance policy. The co-chairs will name a neutral facilitator to work with the committee. There is also a provision for an arbitrator to be appointed in the event the council cannot agree on a recommendation.



Again, Lawrence Nicoll captures natural beauty even when the sun is not shining. Fog off the melting snow creates many magical scenes. (Lawrence R. Nicoll Photo)

Attracting Cardinals To The Backyard

By Christine Urquhart

Knowing cardinals are being sighted in Masstown we need to consider what we can do to attract them to our backyards. Setting out a bird feeder filled with black oil sunflower seeds is a sure fire way to attract northern cardinals - but ambitious gardeners shouldn't stop there because the right plants bring in these ruby red beauties and other songbirds too!

The key is to focus on the trifecta of providing food, cover and places to raise young. Because cardinals prefer to eat larger seeds, look for plants which produce large seeds, such as Purple Majesty millet, nasturtium, purple coneflower, safflower, sunflower and sweet pea. Cardinals also like fruit and again prefer ones with large seeds such as hackberry, dogwood, northern bayberry and serviceberry.

Planting softwood trees and dense hedges will give the cardinals a safe haven to both hide and nest in. Cardinals also, like the other birds, need a fresh supply of water - be it a nearby creek or river, pond, or a bird bath. Even if you don't get cardinals in your yard right away you will attract other song birds and they will bring you joy!

Scotia Pool Costs Down, Revenues Increase

By Maurice Rees

Glenda Bower was calm and collected when she appeared before Colchester Council seeking \$100,000 on behalf of the Scotia Pool Society at council's grants for non-profits presentation night on March 1st. She started her presentation by pointing out in the last year the pool society in association with ACOA has invested approximately \$500,000 in capital repairs to the pool building starting by

switching from an oil fired burner to propane to provide greater efficiency reducing water heating costs. The pool was closed for six weeks in November to undergo major interior renovation to accommodate the new Dectron HVAC system; an anonymous donation funded replacement of tiles in the locker rooms, showers, office and pool deck.

Future capital expenditures include replace seven circulating pumps, sand fil-

ters, replace of the roof and repairs to the exterior brick work. As a means of increasing fund raising the society has partnered with the Branch 26, Royal Canadian Legion, Truro to run the Chase the Ace program. If the initiative grows as it has in other areas of the province, it could provide significant funding. Proceeds from the Chase the Ace will be split evenly between the capital account and the operating account.

Improvements to the pool and how the society operates has decreased operating costs while increasing revenues. The new HVAC system which has arrived on site, but will be installed in warmer weather, requiring the pool to be closed for five days, is predicted to lower heating costs with its ability to recycle heat from the air into the water.

The switch to a propane burner reduced heating costs by \$28,000 down to \$72,000. The switch to LED lighting has changed electricity costs from a budgeted \$28,000 down to \$14,000 for 10 months and only two months

to go in the current budget cycle.

Ms Bower indicated that if council approves \$100,000 the society will be able to undertake further improvements resulting in being able to be very closely to providing a balanced budget. As a result of an improved facility, attendance has continued to grow.

Even though the pool was closed for renovations during December, the 10 open months in the past year up to end of February, 2017, attendance was 7,215. Broken down by geographical areas, the attendance was as follows: Town of Truro, 1405; District 1, 1557; District 2, 145; District 3, 200; District 4, 99; District 5, 922; District 6, 797; District 7, 251; District 8, 304; District 9, 364; District 10, 133 and District 11, 1038.

Red Cross Swimming lessons registrations were as follows: April to June 2016, 186 kids; July and August 2016, 64 kids and September to December 2016, 223 kids. Figures have not be tabulated for the January to March 2017 period.

Burning Restrictions Now Apply

Wildfire risk season is now underway until October 15 and burning restrictions apply. People should check the BurnSafe website at novascotia.ca/BurnSafe for counties where burning domestic brush or campfires is permitted or restricted.

Between March and April during the last five years, firefighters fought a total of 441 wildfires in Nova Scotia. The BurnSafe map is updated daily at 2 p.m. to show if burning of domestic brush and campfires is permitted that day.

The map shows daily restrictions for each county. Most important, no burning is permitted anywhere from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on any day. If a county is shown in green, burning is permitted from 2

p.m. through 8 a.m. If a county is shown in yellow, burning is permitted between 7 p.m. and 8 a.m. If a county is shown in red, burning is not allowed.

The burning restriction information on the BurnSafe map is also available, in a recorded message, by calling toll-free, 1-855-564-2876 (B-U-R-N).

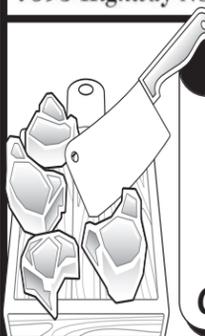
The map applies only to the burning of campfires and domestic brush, which is brush on properties of homeowners, woodlot owners, farmers and other non-industrial lands. Industrial brush burning still requires a paper permit from the Department of Natural Resources.

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CARE Food Engineering Inc., Truro Gets \$20,000

By Maurice Rees

Five Nova Scotia startups will participate in an acceleration program to help grow their clean technology ventures. The CleanTech Accelerate Program provides the companies with financing and business guidance.

CARE Food Engineering Inc., Truro under the direction of Alex Martynenko was chosen as one of the five, because of its goal to enable energy-efficient production of dried natural foods.

Innovacorp and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) announced the five participating startups on March 3. The Government of Canada's support for the program is part of its \$500,000 contribution to a variety of clean technology programs being led by Innovacorp. The investment is aimed at moving Nova Scotia high-potential clean technologies through the start-up phase to investment-readiness. The non-repayable contribution is provided through ACOA's Business Development Program.

The five startup companies are developing innovations to: Turn crickets into a high-quality protein powder - Joy Hillier of Midgard Insect Farm Inc., Windsor; recycle expanded polystyrene (known as Styrofoam) - Dietmar Tholen and Scott Baxter, BDT Polystyrene Recycling Inc., Newcombville, Lunenburg County;

help telecom carriers better manage their energy needs - Kianoosh Yazdani and Tim Speed of Minute88 Inc., Halifax; provide solar energy to households in remote communities - Sebastian

Manchester and Jeff Schnurr of Jaza Energy Inc., Halifax and enable energy-efficient production of dried natural foods - Alex Martynenko of CARE Food Engineering Inc., Truro.

The participating companies will each receive \$20,000 cash to help address key technical and business milestones and move closer to being investment ready. They will also receive training and mentorship from private sector partners: thenextphase, Enginuity and Ecofuel.

Companies from across Nova Scotia made 17 submissions to the CleanTech Accelerate Program. The five participants were selected from the nine companies invited to pitch their ventures to judges in January.

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