

# REES' Pieces

## Watch out for Excitement from West Colchester

Within the past couple of week more and more people are referring to Kevin O'Leary as Donald Trump of the north. In last month's issue, the Shoreline Journal printed an article with a graph showing O'Leary was near the front of pack, primarily because of his name recognition. Following remarks in PEI, it's entirely possible, he is downgraded. If picked as leader, it will be a long time before the Conservatives elects many MPs from Atlantic Canada.

We have a total of 32 seats and would swing a big stick by providing enough seats to determine who did form the government. An ideal place to be, with others looking to us for support.

I'm not trying to change the focus of the Shoreline to a national audience away from taking care of and pushing forward to point the needs of those in West Colchester and Cumberland South.

Back to the province or our area, it is anticipated we could be making a trek to the polls, before the June issue. Take notice of the special note near the top of Page 1 Briefs in this issue, as we might have to change the publication dates for the June issue.

Last week, the provincial Financial Condition Index (FCI) was released providing a report on each town and municipality. The FCI report combines a range of information into a single document and providing a platform where staff under council's direction may wish to focus their efforts. Each report has three sections, with five categories in each section. The sections are Revenue Dimension, Budget Dimension and Debt and Capital Dimension.

Each municipality's FCI report was colour coded with green indicating the municipality meets the Threshold and municipality average; Yellow indicates the municipality met the overall threshold, but did not meet the province wide average. A red indicator suggests a more serious position in that the municipality did not meet the overall threshold or average from around the province. or

Overall Colchester, Truro and Stewiacke were in the thick of the pack when compared to other rural municipalities or towns around the province. The FCI report for Municipality of Cumberland was entirely blank because data was not provided in any category.

Of the municipal units in Cumberland and Colchester, the town of Amherst fared the best in that it did not have any red flags. It had seven green indicators and eight in the yellow category.

Of the 15 total indicators / flags for each municipality, Colchester received eight green indicators; four yellow and three red. Truro finished with eight green indicators, five yellow and two red. Stewiacke's final tally was six green, five yellow and four red.

If your head is spinning you are probably asking what do all these figures mean? None of these flags spell trouble.

If there are areas which need attention, it would be in the red categories. In Colchester's case to be on par with the rest of the municipalities and get rid of the red indicators, it needs to pay attention to the following categories: Deficits over five years, Un-depreciated assets and contribution to capital reserves. Meanwhile to get rid of its two red indicators, Truro needs to focus on changes to operating reserves, and make larger contributions to five year capital reserves. Stewiacke will get rid of its red indicators, when it reaches town threshold status on Commercial Property Assessment, residential tax effort, budgeted expenditure accuracy and un-depreciated assets.

While municipal staff and councillors review financial procedures to get rid of red indicators in the FCI index, everyone in Colchester needs to be prepared for the excitement and activities to improve community and economic development in West Colchester.

A number of dedicated people have spent the last year planning, organizing and preparing for the re-launch of revitalized West Colchester Community Development Association (WCCDA), which had its beginning in the early 60's, but has been running on idle for several years. In three community open house meetings, over 80 people have stepped forward with ideas and offering to help improve community development, then go forward on economic matters.

A meeting will be held April 12 at the Bass River Fire Hall, 7 pm to set the date for a general meeting and give notice to by-law changes and establish a nominating committee.

**Maurice**

# Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.

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## OP-ED

### Support Grants Available for Students

By Premier Stephen McNeil

There is a great deal of work underway to focus on improving our classroom conditions for teachers, students and parents. As we move forward with the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions announced in early March, we also want to continue to enhance the school experience for students across Nova Scotia.

Proms, graduations, drama, band, sports and other student competitions are all important aspects of the school experience, but these activities need financial support and fundraising is often key to their success.

We created Student Support Grants in 2013 to try and address fundraising pressures on families, parents and school communities, and to enhance experiences for our students. The objective of the grants is to allow school communities to tailor services and programming to create special student experiences, as well as improve student success.

This funding has been used for a wide range of activities including grad photo sit-

ting fees, class trips, instrument rentals and guest speakers. It is also available to help with graduations and award banquets.

We remind all parents interested in accessing these grants to contact their child's principal. Last month an additional \$3.4 million was put into the grant program to benefit students directly. School principals have the authority to draw on these funds to support activities in their schools.

Since the 2014-15 school years, approximately \$2.1 million dollars has been allocated to school boards each year. These funds are allocated to all schools in the province with a base amount of \$5,000 per school, plus \$1.00 for every student enrolled in that school. The additional \$3.4 million has been allocated on a per student basis.

Any portion of the additional money added this year, that isn't spent before the end of the school year, will be carried over. This will be in addition to what has already been allocated for the 2017-18 school year.

We understand there are parents volunteering across

this province to ensure students don't miss out on the school activities that make their school year so special. We want to help you do that. Student Support Grants are available to help fund many school initiatives. We encourage you to talk to your school principal about accessing the money available.

On behalf of all Nova Scotians I want to acknowledge the many ways in which you continue to get involved in your school communities in order to create the richest, most enjoyable school experience for all students.

Thanks also to the many classroom teachers, students and parents who put their names forward for the recently formed Council to Improve Classroom Conditions. We appreciate your desire to take part in shaping the future of our classrooms. We are excited to hear the ideas and solutions you will bring to the table. Together, with your experience and insight, we will improve our classrooms to ensure the best learning environments for teachers and students.

For more information on Student Support Grants visit [www.ednet.ns.ca/student-support-grants](http://www.ednet.ns.ca/student-support-grants).

Dear Commissioner Paulson, RCMP

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed closure of the RCMP Divisional Operational Communications Center in Truro, Nova Scotia. The proposal would result in the transfer of 50+ jobs from Truro to Halifax, and I am entirely opposed to such a plan. I ask that all of these jobs remain in the Truro area. I do not wish to see families uprooted, and I do not support moving jobs from rural Nova Scotia to Halifax.

I also want to express my concern regarding the public safety implications of the proposed closure. The centralizing of all communications at one center contradicts best practices, and the very reasoning provided when the communications office was developed in Truro just ten years ago.

Centralizing 93% of all dispatching in Halifax, when it is currently evenly split between Halifax and Truro, would leave the entire 911 dispatch system vulnerable in the occurrence of a cata-

strophic event in Halifax. It is essential that such a vital system have a reliable and ready backup location.

I have raised my concerns about this proposal with Member of Parliament, Bill Casey. Bill Casey also supports maintaining a dispatch center in the Truro area, and keeping all 50 jobs right here.

I am requesting that the RCMP investigate an alternative to a move from Truro to Halifax. It is vital to our local economy, and to public safety, that the RCMP Divisional Operational Communications

Dear Editor:

It is long past due for Canada to stop depending on and selling non-renewable energy sources. Canadians are already experiencing the devastating effects of Global Warming and Climate Change because of use of gas, oil and coal.

NOW is the time to start using clean energy such as wind, geothermal and solar. Canadians want these and need them. It's time to put an end to fossil fuel subsidies

once and for all.

Gail Matwichuk  
Five Islands

Dear Editor:

Janet Knox, CEO of Nova Scotia Health Authority and Denise Perret, Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness have both recently stated Nova Scotia has the highest rate of physicians to patients in the country.

This means we have more physicians per patient population than any other province.

But with news reports of a doctor shortage, you might wonder how this could be so.

Nova Scotia's doctors provide specialized services - things like organ transplants, complex maternal care and some cancer treatments - to people across the Maritime and Atlantic provinces, not just Nova Scotia residents.

Dalhousie Medical School in Halifax, which trains medical students and residents, also has family medicine residency training sites in

The Shoreline Journal

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Wright's Pharmasave
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Center remains in the Truro area.

Sincerely,  
Craig Johnson  
Liberal candidate for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River

Yarmouth, Sydney and Kentville. Physicians across the province teach the next generation of both family doctors and specialists, which means they must balance their academic duties with patient care.

Nova Scotia also has a robust medical research program. Physician-researchers work to improve understanding of disease and prevention/treatment. It's important work and it takes them away

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