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Ocean Sonics part of \$4.1-Million AI-Powered Project

By Maurice Rees

Ocean Sonics, Truro Heights, formerly from Great Village is one of four firms within Canada's Ocean Supercluster to undertake the \$4.1 million AI-powered Monitoring for Sustainable Wave-powered Desalination Project led by Oneka Technologies. This project aims to accelerate the commercialization and AI-enablement of Canadian ocean hardware platforms to support the global scaleup of sustainable wave-powered desalination solutions. This helps expand access to reliable freshwater, and addresses global challenges including water scarcity, climate change, and environmental sustainability.

The project is led by Sherbrooke, QC-based Oneka Technologies, in partnership with Ocean Sonics in Truro Heights, NS; Innovobot Labs in Montreal, QC, and Lengkeek Vessel Engineering in Dartmouth, NS. With a total project value of \$4.1 million, Canada's Ocean Supercluster is investing \$1.6 million, with the balance of funding coming from project partners.

The AI-Powered Monitoring for Sustainable Wave-Powered Desalination Project will advance the understanding of how diverse marine assets and ocean datasets can be jointly leveraged to reduce ocean operational issues and costs, and to better understand how low carbon desalination solutions interact with their surrounding coastal environment. The result will be the world's first commercial scale, long term demonstration of a wave-powered desalination system that delivers fresh water to end users, and enhanced AI-driven acoustic and IoT monitoring capabilities for multiple offshore sectors.

This cross-provincial partnership strengthens national priorities to build one Canadian economy, while advancing Canada's global leadership in ocean innovation and the sustainable, low-carbon development of our oceans.

Through Ambition 2035 and together with Canada's ocean community, we are bold in our ambition to grow Canada's ocean economy 5X to \$220 billion by 2035. Continued investment in the accelerated development and commercialization of globally relevant, made in Canada ocean solutions will help us realize this ambition. Read more about recommendations to help achieve this transformational growth opportunity outlined in Charting the Course to 5X Growth in Canada's Ocean Economy and the projected benefits to Canada here.

Cumberland Raises Concerns Over NB Toll at Aulac

Cumberland County Municipal Council is expressing concern regarding the Government of New Brunswick's proposal to establish a toll station on the Trans-Canada Highway near Aulac.

Mayor Rod Gilroy, on behalf of Council, noted that the Aulac corridor is the only land link connecting Nova Scotia to the rest of Canada, making it a critical route for residents, businesses, and the movement of goods.

"Any toll placed at this location will have direct and disproportionate impacts on Cumberland County and northern Nova Scotia," said Mayor Gilroy. "Our communities rely heavily on this corridor for trade, employment, and access to services."

Council is particularly concerned about the potential economic implications, including increased costs for local businesses, reduced competitiveness,

and possible impacts on tourism and workforce mobility in the Amherst and border region.

While details of the proposed toll—including the rate—have not yet been released, the County is urging both the Government of New Brunswick and the Government of Nova Scotia to carefully consider the broader regional impacts.

"In a rural region like ours, the loss of affordability and ease of movement can have significant consequences," added Mayor Gilroy. "We encourage both provinces to work collaboratively to ensure that solutions do not create new barriers between our communities."

Cumberland County looks forward to further information on the proposal and will continue to advocate for the interests of its residents and businesses.

The New Brunswick government has not released specific details as to when shovels in the

ground, or toll rates. Several media reports and pundits suggest the rate for passenger vehicles could be \$6-\$10 per vehicle.

In 2025, Nova Scotia's Premier Houston's government eliminated tolls for Nova Scotia vehicles on Highway 104 Western Alignment, know as the Cobequid Pass to fulfill and election promise when they eased into power with a Super Majority with 43 seats out of total of 55.

Opened in 1997, it took 27 years to pay the construction and maintenance cost, so that in 2024 the Cobequid Pass was debt-free. In its last years tolls were approximately \$19-Million, less about \$12-Million for salaries and expenses leaving \$7-Million as a surplus. Revenue figures for 2025-2026 are not complete, because the fiscal year is not complete for another week. Expenses and maintenance are expected to be in the normal range, because toll booths are still operational.

Feeling emboldened with their 2024 super majority, the Houston government eliminated tolls on the MacDonald and MacKay bridges spanning Halifax Harbour in late 2025. Toll revenue of nearly \$40-Million has evaporated, plus the \$1-Million plus, it cost to reconfigure the toll plaza.

Eliminating the two toll systems deducted provincial revenues by approximately \$50-Million which is about 24% of the \$1.2-Billion budget deficit. In other words, or calculated another way, maintaining the tolls on Cobequid Pass and the two Halifax-Dartmouth bridges would repay the \$1.2-Billion budget deficit in five years, or contributed enough to the provincial coffers we would be facing approximately \$47-Million less in program and service cuts in the upcoming 2026-2027 fiscal year.



The Parrsboro Skating Club held their fanale skating performance recently. Lots of colour and excitement for all. Lawrence Nicoll takes us through a photo feature of the performances. Congratulations to all the performers, coaches and their families.

Lawrence R. Nicoll is Relocating

South Cumberland News regular contributor and famed photographer, Lawrence R. Nicoll and his wife are relocating to Amherst effective immediately.

The Nicoll's were renting their location in Parrsboro, but unfortunately the landlords died last January. This winter they have been busy sorting, downsizing and packing preparing for the big move to Amherst. Lawrence says, "We just got a senior's unit in the large townhouse behind the Pharmasave in Amherst. As of March 1st our official address will be: 41 Gladstone Avenue, Unit 4, Amherst, NS, B4H 4C6. My Cell will remain 902-297-3454.

Highlights from March 18th Council Committee

Submitted by Darrell Cole

Here are some highlights from Wednesday's committee of the whole meeting:

Council passes a motion to forward First Reading of the By-law to Amend the Public Sewers By-law 26-04 to the March 25, 2026, Council meeting.

Council passes motion

to forward the amended Low-Income Tax Exemption Policy and increase in the income cut-off and exemption amounts to \$37,368 and \$548, respectively to the March 25, 2026 Regular Council meeting for consideration.

Public hearing into an application from Natural Forces Solar to rezone a

portion of PID 25067778, located 530 John Black Rd, East Amherst, from Country Residential (RCou) to Rural Resource (Rsrc) to enable

the development of a commercial solar project.

To see the meeting agenda package, go to: eSCRIBE Agenda Package To watch a recording of the meeting, go to: Committee of the Whole Meeting,

Municipal Council Meeting Recording

The February 25, 2026, regular meeting of Cumberland Municipal Council is available for viewing on the municipality's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cm2zgb2v7Y>

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