

## Joy Laking Expresses Concern Over Doctor Replacement

*In addition to be an acclaimed artist, who calls Portauisque home, Joy Laking has always devoted a lot of energy and time for the betterment of West Colchester. Her concerns about the status of finding a replacement for two retiring doctors at the Bass River Medical Clinic caused her to post the following on her Facebook Page. The Shoreline Journal is reprinting her posting with permission.*

I have lived in Portauisque for over forty years. Since we heard eighteen months ago that our doctor Karen Ewing will be retiring in September 2020, we have been on the government list for a new family doctor.

I have heard that Bass River might be getting a family doctor from England, however I also heard that he won't come here during covid as he intends to work both here and in England coming for a month and then returning to England to work. As an extra doctor, this might be feasible but as our only family doctor, this is not doable as we would probably lose the medical clinic and it's staff and the drug store. As well, the covid reality may be with us for a long time making this an impossibility for the next several years.

Everyone needs a family doctor. We in this area are especially vulnerable because as soon as there is no doctor, the drug store will likely have to close. Also we are under a huge amount of stress be-

cause of the recent mass shooting. If we do not have a new full time family doctor before September 2020, then I ask that a locum position be filled. Ideally, a new family doctor, would also come with some regular mental health resources, such as a collaborative practice with a social worker, nurse practitioner or a weekly clinic with a mental health specialist.

As tax payers, do we pay anything towards medical school? If so, then I feel that this should require, new doctors to work where ever they are sent in the province, for a period of time. It is up to the government to pay acceptable salaries and to have enough of a budget that we all can have a family doctor. This should not be handled by a third party like MSI that is required to cut costs or that spends money trying to insinuate that doctors are not working hard enough. Our doctors are invaluable and need to be respected and adequately reimbursed.

In the past couple of years, I have personally met three doctors that could not get a billing license in Nova Scotia. One was a cardiologist from the Mayo Clinic who relocated to Liverpool. There is no cardiology between Yarmouth and Halifax and she could only get a billing number if she worked in Halifax. Another one was a young Nova Scotian who graduated from medical school in Ireland because he could not get a spot at Dalhousie. When he graduated he couldn't find

anyone to supervise his residency here and had to return to Ireland to do it. He is now in family practice there. The third is a family doctor from Great Village who graduated from Dalhousie Medical School. He worked his career in the USA so that he could have a shorter work week and more family time. Recently he wanted to get a billing number here so that he could come back home to Nova Scotia and work a few days a week in our area. It was denied and he is now practicing in British Columbia. A friend of mine knows of two other cases where doctors were denied billing numbers. One was a full time local doctor who wanted to transition into retirement by working part time and having another doctor work full time. This was made so impossible by MSI such that he retired full stop with out giving himself or his patients this transition. The other was a neurologist from the Ukraine who moved to Canada with her partner and couldn't get a billing number in Nova Scotia and so she went back to University to become something else.

I want to know just what steps are being taken to ensure that we have at least one full time family doctor in Bass River in September. If we don't have such a replacement effective September 2020, then I would like to be assured that we will have a full time locum doctor until we do have a replacement.

## "This has been a Beauracratic Nightmare"

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the individuals completing this were professionals in the field and sworn to confidentiality. We inquired as to the cost of purchasing the electronic medical records system and then transferring the current records to the electronic system. Nearly \$50,000, but the health dept would pay \$12,000, the society committed \$10,000 and we are working on finding additional financial support.

Our society made the decision to hire locally and complete in house. That process has started, however we have been advised the Provincial money is not available unless we have a Dr on contract for at least 9 months. Our committee has determined that it is critical patients who have used this clinic over the years must have their records secured. We continue to work on this and search for funding.

We are currently in what I believe is a crisis! Today we will be sending letters to both the Northern Region Dr recruitment officer and MLA Karen Casey asking for an immediate emergency meeting to assist and direct us how to move forward from here.

We understand that Doctor Recruitment is a challenge in Nova Scotia. We understand Covid provides additional challenges. However we also understand that Doctors continue to be recruited to other communities across Nova Scotia even while we work thru Covid. We need help in understanding what is so different

here. We have an available turnkey clinic, enabling a doctor to walk in and go to work. We have a rural community that has supported this clinic, for 40 years. We have a drug store attached and a clinic that prior to Covid permitted blood collection, seniors foot care and a massage therapist, yet we still struggle.

The purpose of this long winded update is to inform the public the work that has been done and the challenges we are facing. We need your voice. You must ensure that Government officials are aware of how important it is that our communities receive their support.

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## UNESCO Approves GeoPark

*Continued from page 1*  
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More complete coverage and details about the announcement are contained in the pages of South Cumberland News elsewhere in this issue.

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