

REES' Pieces

It's not a joyous time

Christmas, a time for children, is coming, but it's not a joyous time. Nobody is happy. Students are worried they might not have their school Christmas Concert. Parents are worried "what will take care of the kids all day?" I have to go to work, plus there is a lot of preparation for the big day.

Premier McNeil, most of his MLAs, particularly Karen Casey, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and education department staff are totally frustrated wondering what will solve the situation. If they came up with a new offer to teachers would it be defeated and tossed back for a third time? Teachers are now worried even more. Well over 90% of them voted to strike, but they are now concerned, if they take significant job action will they be locked out and not get paid in December?

With an average salary of \$76,000 per year imagine not having any money to celebrate Christmas. Just how bare are their cupboards compared with parents? Particularly single parents, who might be clerking in the retail environment.

Oh, the other group extremely upset is the general public. They don't have children, maybe grandchildren, in the system. It's hard for these people to fathom out why after two negotiated agreements, recommended for acceptance by the negotiating team and union leaders, we are still "walking on eggs" to get the teacher's contract settled.

Is it much wonder many Nova Scotians wish teachers would either go on strike or government would lock them out and get this matter off the front pages? Significant polling shows there would be very little sympathy for teachers. Yes, there is lots of anger and concerns the teachers are using the students as pawns.

Within the last week an underground rumour mill seems to be gaining traction that either now or later the government should bring in legislation to permit "charter schools". Those schools would be in existence now if the government would provide funding equal to or maybe 10% less than today's cost per student through the public education system. Charter schools, similar to private schools; provide the parents more input into their children's education and higher expectations for outcomes.

It's not a pretty sight. It's very probable this year's Christmas turkey will be served amid a cloud of educational confusion.

Enough of that.

Now onto something very positive, which could be larger than the shipbuilding contract in Halifax and totally revitalize rural Nova Scotia.

The province's agreement with Ottawa will see a Carbon cap and trade program, which could be the best thing for rural Nova Scotia for decades. Premier McNeil needs to ensure the program has significant weighting so it totally includes woodlot owners. (See other stories in this issue).

Immediately after the carbon cap and trade agreement was announced, Community Forest International (CFI), representative Dale Prest, was interviewed on CBC Radio saying if the program was implemented so woodlot owners could sell carbon credits to a global market, there would be real improvement to the economy particularly rural Nova Scotia. We know trees capture and store carbon and if managed properly healthy forests would provide a better return for woodlot owners. Sawmills would receive better quality saw logs. It's noted elsewhere in this issue, but Prest says from CFI's 705 acre forest the organization has been able to sell \$300,000 in carbon credits.

He's suggested woodlot owners could receive approximately \$400 per acre on an annual basis. Sure there are costs, as the woodlots have to have a plan and be managed. He sees CFI's role as the sale and marketing of carbon credits, while firms such as Athol Forestry or North Nova Forest Owners Co-op would actually perform the work to bring woodlots up to standard.

With certain projections, as outlined elsewhere, there is possibility woodlot carbon credits could generate more revenue than the shipbuilding contract in Halifax over the same time span, but would be ongoing year after year with an annual economic input of \$1.2-Billion.

It's something woodlot owners should discuss and work hard to make sure it happens. Make sure your MLA hears your voice.

Maurice

\$16.578-Million Building Permits this Fiscal Year

By Maurice Rees

The treasurer's report for fiscal 2015-2016, presented to Colchester Council at its September 29th meeting shows the Municipality of Colchester is a \$45-Million. Revenues were \$44.8-Million (budget \$43.5-Million) with expenditures of \$43.5-Million (budget \$42.3-Million). Revenues from taxes comprised \$31.47-Million of the \$44.87-Million total revenue for the year ended March 31st.

Compared to the previous year, tax revenues increased approximately \$800,000. The operating fund can show significant changes year over year, because of conditional transfers from other gov-

ernments which occur based on larger capital project approvals. The 2014-2015 period reported total revenues of \$45.4-Million compared to \$44.8-Million in 2015-2016.

The operating fund had net revenues of \$1.3-Million compared to \$3.99-Million the previous year. That does not mean the economy is on a downward spiral, because conditional transfers from other governments totaled \$1.99-Million compared to \$4.165-Million the year earlier. The drop in revenues (\$2.176-Million) from other governments accounted for most of the change in the current's years operating fund net revenues of \$1.5-Million

down from \$5.61-Million a year earlier.

As major projects and government initiatives come and go, many feel the important factor is the municipality is operating within established budgets.

The month's building activity report for August totaled \$2.379-Million compared with \$4.394 in August 2015. The largest swing was two residential permits totaling \$390,000 were issued this August compared with 10 permits valued at \$2.095-Million the previous year.

Comparing year over year, 2015 for the same period totaled \$26.1-Million (294 permits) in 2015 compared to \$24.523-Million (333 per-

mits). Within the fiscal year starting April 1, 240 permits in 2015 totaled \$21.233-Million compared to \$16.578-Million with 252 permits since April 1 this year.

Council Conducting Research on "Water Royalties"

By Maurice Rees

With many homeowners on the south shore and many other areas facing the unfortunate situation of "wells running dry" and not having any water, council is becoming even more concerned about the water table in Colchester and could area residents eventually face the same situation. They are also concerned that commercial enterprises are accessing millions of litres of water annually and not paying anything. Council has suggested royalties should exist, but the province controls the resource and receives only \$200 per year from each company.

In a headline story published in the December 2015 issue, following a November 10th presentation to council, the opening paragraphs of the story are as follows: "It would be hard to describe if Colchester Councillors and Mayor were shocked, saddened, upset or flabbergasted, when they were informed 1.636-Million liters of quality ground water is extracted

on a daily basis from bottled water wells within the municipality and sold by the province for less than \$1 per day.

The facts came to council's attention on November 10th during a presentation by Gordon Check, Senior Hydrogeologist with Nova Scotia Department of Environment, who provided an update on groundwater resources within the Municipality..."

There was considerable discussion around the council table, but Councillor Parker provided the best example of how public opinion has changed. He said that four years ago when he was running in the municipal election not one person mentioned water, but this year during the fall election many people mentioned their concern about "lack of water".

Council asked staff to research and report back to council, what action other municipalities are doing, so that a combined approach can be directed to UNSM and the provincial government.

MacElmon Road to get Roundabout in 2017

By Maurice Rees

A complicated almost seven year delay seems to have been overcome and MacElmon Road, Debert might see considerable construction activity in 2017. Design work will be completed by CBCL for a new roundabout with the awarding of a \$46,000 contract at council's meeting on November 24th.

A new roundabout on MacElmon Road, Debert has been under consideration since 2010 to allow for the creation of new roads extending along the highway frontage at the entrance to the Debert Park. Although a traditional signalized intersection was preferred by the municipality, the roundabout is a provincial requirement. The work was awarded to

CBCL for a contract amount of \$75,265, but the work stalled at the 85% complete mark. The necessary geotechnical work could not be carried out due to archaeological restrictions. The project was then shelved, pending archaeological clearance of the highway frontage lands at MacElmon Road.

Council included \$2.6M in 2017/18 for construction of the roundabout. The project is to be funded 50% by Gas Tax and 50% by the Debert Sale of Homes reserve. It's planned to finish the roundabout design in order to proceed with construction next fiscal year.

Council approved the award of the design services for the Debert Roundabout and Highway

Frontage Servicing to CBCL in the amount of \$46,000 and that an internal contingency of \$4,000 be approved, to be spent only under authority of the Director of Public Works."

In addition to the approved \$2.6-Million for the roundabout construction, Council also recently received \$750,000 in funding under the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund for the construction of water mains, sewer lines and storm water systems as necessary to service the future highway frontage lots on MacElmon Road. The program offers 50% funding from the Federal Government and 25% funding from the provincial government, leaving Council's commitment at \$187,500.

The
Shoreline
Journal

Here's where
to find us:

BASS RIVER:

Bayside Pharmacy
Dominion Chair Factory Store

BIBLE HILL:

C.W. Fraser Pharmacy
MacQuarries Pharmacy

DEBERT:

Barnhill's Superette
Debert Mini-Mart

FIVE ISLANDS:

Masstown Market Five Islands

GLENHOLME:

Double "C" Truckstop
Glenholme General Store

GREAT VILLAGE:

Wilson's Gas

MAITLAND:

Frieze & Roy General Store

MASSTOWN:

Masstown Market
MTM Retail Gas (Petro-Can)

NORTH RIVER:

Grant's Grocery

ONSLow:

Onslow Market

PARRSBORO:

CrossRoads Co-op
Ken's Grocery
Wright's Pharmasave

TRURO:

Atlantic Superstore
MacQuarrie's Pharmasave
(Esplanade)

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